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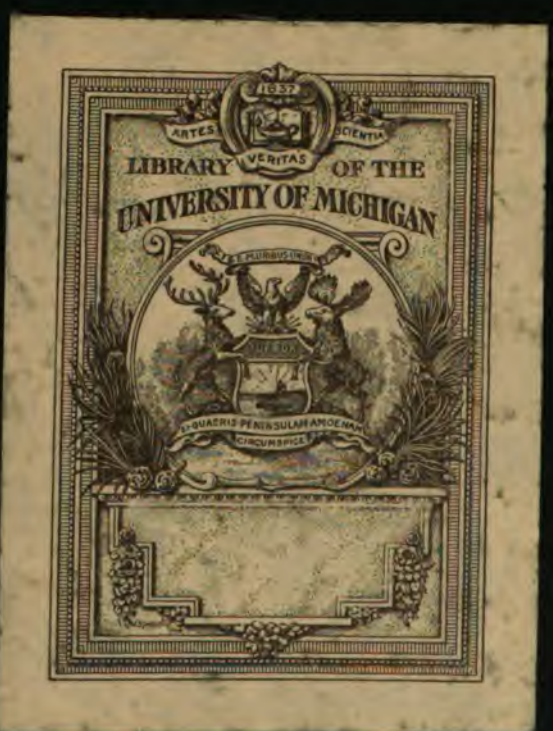
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WITH A MAP AND TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THE object of the present work is to place before the reader the most important factors in the Far Eastern problem; to discuss, as far as space will permit, the various questions connected with its solution; and to give an account of the principal events which have led up to the existing situation. Too little attention has hitherto been bestowed upon the Chinese point of view, which has proved, so far as our imperial interests are concerned, a stumbling-block to British aims in China. It is quite as essential, in order that a thorough grasp may be obtained of the present aspect of affairs, to enter into Chinese pros and cons, as it is necessary to consider British interests and international claims. A book would, in fact, be incomplete which purported to depict the perplexing phases of the problem under discussion, without instituting an inquiry into the political and social forces which are at work in China, and which must ultimately decide the points at issue.

In the belief that it is better to start with a high aim such as this and fail, than to be contented with attempting a one-sided picture suited to a narrow-minded imperialism, this book has been written. The author is perfectly aware of its shortcomings, as well as of the fact that there are many far more competent authorities in this country who would have suc-

ceeded brilliantly in the task which he has attempted. The general scheme of the book is to give in an introductory chapter the salient features of the political situation in the Far East. Upon this follow a sketch of China's resources, a short summary of her history, and a description of the political, commercial, and social aspects of the country. In this connection particular regard is given to those elements of Chinese society which have the most important bearing on the relations between China and the outer world. The vexed missionary question is briefly treated; and there is a chapter on the Chinese army, based upon facts which have been chiefly obtained from German sources. Finally, an account of China's relations with the West, from an early period down to the present day, has been attempted; the main object being to set down in a digestible form, not every single event, but those occurrences which seem to the author to have been mainly responsible in bringing about the present situation. The last chapters deal with the progress which China has made in respect to the adoption of Western mechanical improvements, the activity of foreign railway enterprise, and the state of Chinese finances; to which are appended some concluding remarks on the political and commercial outlook.

The author wishes to express his gratitude to Sir Halliday Macartney and Professor R. K. Douglas, to whose valuable assistance and advice he is much indebted. A few of the photographs which accompany this volume have been kindly lent by Sir Halliday; but the bulk of the illustrations are reproductions of the admirable drawings by Wm. Alexander, draughtsman to the embassy of Lord Macartney in 1792, for the use of which the British Museum authorities were good

enough to grant permission. A large number of English and foreign works have necessarily been consulted; but the author is chiefly indebted to the works of the following authorities:— Peter Auber, D. C. Boulger, M. von Brandt, G. N. Curzon, Professor R. K. Douglas, Chas. Gutzlaff, R. S. Gundry, the Abbé Huc A. Little, W. F. Mayers, F. von Richthofen, and Eugène Simon A great deal of valuable information has also been derived from the Chinese Repository, the reports of the mission to China of the Blackburn chamber of commerce, the parliamentary blue-books, and the admirable correspondence in the *Times*, supplemented by information from private sources. The chapter on finance is based upon Mr E. H. Parker's letters to the *Times* and the official report of Mr Consul Jamieson.

LONDON, 1899.

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CHINA

CHAPTER I

IMPENDING CHANGES IN THE FAR EAST

The New Political Stage—Conflicting Opinions about the Future of Japan—China's unexpected Collapse—The Eastern Triple Alliance—The Fruits of our Policy—Spheres of Influence—The Future of China.

UNTIL quite recently China was scarcely more than a name to the people of Great Britain; yet within an incredibly short space of time that distant country of the Far East has become the political stage upon which the drama of the world seems destined to be played out. The scene of the struggle between the great rival Powers of the West to maintain an international equilibrium has been shifted from the immediate neighbourhood of Europe, where the Ottoman Empire has been practically abandoned to the inevitable outcome of its own inherent weakness, and has been transferred by the irresistible march of events to those vast regions on the confines of Asia whose civilized millions have for scores of centuries been isolated from the rest of humanity. Scarcely more than a page of the history of our connection with China has as yet been written; but no one who reads his daily newspaper, and keeps pace with the passing events of the hour, can have failed to foresee that

great changes are impending, and that the next chapter of English history will be bound up with the solution of a new imperial problem, which may not only alter the map of the world, but will in all probability seriously affect the future conditions of life in both hemispheres.

As to the exact nature of these changes opinions are divided. Many people view the extraordinarily rapid development of the Japanese, and the marvellous aptitude with which they have assimilated, and in some cases even improved upon, Western ideas, with great apprehension. They predict that Japan's ambition to become the Great Britain of the East will be realized within a measurable distance of time, and that her predominance in Asia will not only injure British trade, but will prove a serious menace to her existence in the Pacific as a great Power. That is, from our standpoint, a pessimistic view of the situation. But there are others who see no danger, at least for a very long time to come, in Japanese progress. This newly-acquired European civilization of the Japanese is, they declare, mere veneer, and lies no more than skin deep. The wonderful military successes gained by them in the war with China are not considered by these critics to afford any real test of the discipline of their army or the capacity of the generals who conducted the campaign. Had the Japanese soldiers been opposed to the trained battalions of a great European Power, instead of having to face a mere disordered rabble who took to their heels and scarcely paused to fire a few pebbles out of their antiquated matchlocks, it is asserted that they would not in any sense have proved equal to the occasion. One could, of course, hardly expect things to be otherwise. Rome was not built in a day; and no amount of national genius would enable the Japanese to accomplish in one generation what it has taken Europe centuries of progress to acquire.

Nevertheless, the Japanese danger is potentially present, and will have to be taken into account. Already the commercial rivalry of Japan has made itself keenly felt in Eastern markets.

Having set up spindles of her own, she is able, through abundance of cheap labour and with the raw material close at hand, to supply China with cotton manufactures at a price with which Manchester cannot compete. And it is also stated that Japanese coal has driven the Australian product entirely out of the Eastern market. Trade experts, it is true, declare that Japanese imitations of European commodities are flimsy and of inferior manufacture; though the same thing may be said of many articles made in Birmingham and elsewhere. But time will bring improvement; and Japan has proved herself so apt a pupil, that no doubt can be entertained of her speedily arriving at an industrial equality with European nations.

There is, on the other hand, almost a consensus of opinion as to the political future of China. She presents to the general eye the melancholy spectacle of an ancient and venerable empire on the verge of dissolution. It is argued from the incapacity of the central government at Peking and from the corruptness which permeates her public service, that China is suffering from an incurable disease for which there is no remedy. The physicians of Europe vie with each other in prescribing spheres of influence and railway concessions. We can do nothing for the patient, they say, therefore let us hasten the partition. China has friends, of course, who believe in her inherent strength and the imperishable nature of many of her wonderful institutions; but their voice is small in comparison with the ever-increasing torrent of commercial clamour which is heard on every side. Whatever may be the merits of the case—on which the reader must form his own judgment after an attentive examination of the facts—there are many people who think that Europe has gone too far to retreat, and that the dismemberment of China is an inevitable prospect which will sooner or later have to be faced by all parties.

The remarkable feature of the case is that no one seems to have suspected China's weakness, until it was suddenly revealed by her complete collapse before the armies of her hereditary

enemy Japan. The result of the war of 1894-5 took Europe by surprise; and of England, at least, it may be said that she did not recover her wits in time to profit by the occasion. It must seem extraordinary to men of business that the government of this country had not been informed by their agents at Peking of the entire absence of military organization throughout the Chinese Empire. Yet such appears to have been the case. It could not have been, one would think, a difficult matter for those who were on the spot to obtain reliable information on a subject of such vital importance. It seems almost incredible that a country holding commercial and diplomatic relations with another should not only be ignorant of its total lack of defences, but should actually be infatuated with a belief in its impregnability and military prowess.

In order to understand the sequence of events, it is necessary to briefly recall the main incidents connected with the Japanese invasion. The ostensible cause of dispute was Japan's desire to undertake the reform and civilization of Korea, a course to which China, who possessed ancient rights of suzerainty over the neighbouring peninsula, was implacably opposed. But this was a mere pretext; it would be far more correct to ascribe the motives of Japan to two principle causes: the political necessity of saving Korea from falling into the hands of Russia; and, in a secondary degree, a long-cherished scheme of revenge for the humiliations inflicted upon her by the Chinese three hundred years before. The incidents which followed the declaration of war proved how completely Japan had prepared herself for the event. Everything had been carefully planned beforehand; and the campaign, though it can scarcely be called brilliant in consideration of the small amount of opposition encountered by the invading force, was, nevertheless, extremely creditable to the foresight and organization of the military authorities. The projected march of the victorious army on Peking was the signal for the capitulation of the Chinese, and Li Hung-chang was dispatched by the central government to sue for the

A MILITARY MANDARIN

peace which was granted by the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The terms of the treaty included the surrender, amongst other territories, of the Liao-tung peninsula and the strategic position of Port Arthur. This was the moment for European intervention, and Japan found her conditions opposed by the combined action of Russia, France, and Germany.

During the earlier part of the conflict between China and Japan an attempt had been made by England to stop the progress of hostilities. But the co-operation of other European Powers, which she had invited, was refused; and not having sufficient naval strength in the Yellow Sea to carry out her intentions single-handed against the wishes of these nations, England drew back into a position of neutrality. But when, finally, the proposal came from Russia, whose ultimate object in the Far East was threatened with complete and permanent frustration, to apply the brake to Japanese exactions, it was met on the part of the British Cabinet by a distinct refusal to co-operate. Being in sore straits, China naturally looked upon those Powers who came to her assistance in the hour of need as her true friends, and the consequence of our standing aloof at that critical period has been a heritage of distrust on the part of the Chinese, which years of diplomatic labour have not succeeded in removing.

We all know that the fruits of our mistaken policy in 1895 have not been limited to the anti-English feeling from which our commercial progress has suffered in China. The friendship of Russia, France, and Germany had its price; the payment of which has permanently dispelled all hope of the great markets of the whole empire being left open to the free commerce of all nations. Two years after the conclusion of peace, Germany seized the important harbour of Kiao-chao, which is situated on the coast of Shantung, and is regarded as the most important naval station of China, on the pretext of securing redress for the murder of two German missionaries in that province. A couple of months later the port was

leased to Germany for ninety-nine years. At the same time Russia commenced operations by "wintering" her fleet at Port Arthur; a manœuvre which was followed by the practically unconditional and permanent surrender to her of that strategical position and the neighbouring station of Talienwan on the 27th of March, 1898. And finally, not to be behindhand, France put forward her claim for a compensating share, and obtained the southern port of Kwang-chow-fu, in addition to a recognition, on the part of the Chinese government, of her political interest in the province of Yunnan.

To these moves England replied by obtaining the lease of Wei-hai-wei, which was granted on the same terms as those which applied to the transfer of Port Arthur to the Russians. There was apparently no particular ground for selecting Wei-hai-wei, beyond the fact that the Chinese were willing to surrender it—probably on account of convenience, as it was about to be evacuated by the Japanese. Wei-hai-wei appears to have been preferred simply because the Chinese thrust it upon us; but whether its disadvantages became evident before or after the transaction it is impossible to say. The lease was to serve as a counter-demonstration; and it does not seem to have troubled anybody what concession was obtained, provided that something was done to keep up appearances.

That, briefly, is the history of the main events which were directly brought about by the war with Japan. In the north of China the Russians and the Germans have been pushing ahead: the former busy with the completion of their great Trans-Siberian railway, and with the Russianizing of Manchuria; the latter organizing syndicates and squeezing out concessions for the thorough exploitation of their Shantung hinterland. In the south, France is consolidating her position; while England alone, save for the unceasing protestations of British merchants whose commercial interests are vested in the Far East, has remained, to all appearances, supine and inactive.

Although spheres of influence have scarcely been officially recognized, they practically exist, and are tacitly admitted. Their exact definition would be the first open step towards the partition of the Chinese Empire, a direction in which events are obviously moving; although it is impossible to determine under what circumstances such a course of action might be adopted, or whether the crisis may be precipitated sooner or later. In this country, at all events, although nothing has been done to save China, there is a distinct desire on the part of those who are interested in the venerable empire, or who have been brought under the fascinating influence of its picturesque civilization, to preserve it from the fate which overtook Poland in the eighteenth century. At the same time, it is now generally admitted that things have been allowed to drift too far. Partition is thought by many to be inevitable; and as England has been unable to protect her friend and ally, the next best thing she can do, in the opinion of the majority, is to take her proper share of the plunder.

According to some critics, the danger of the future is entirely one of European balance in the Far East. If that can be maintained, conflict may be avoided. Let Russia be contented with her Pacific seaboard, and France remain quiescent in the territories already acquired by her: British interests are safeguarded, provided she keep the two Powers at a sufficient distance from her Indian frontiers. The danger of collision with the great Powers of Europe once averted, they only see in the opening up of China to the industrial processes of the West the promise of a future commercial millenium. Once hand over the toiling millions of the Chinese provinces to Western tuition, and European enterprise will do the rest. By helping the Chinese to make use of the enormous mineral wealth which is now lying practically untouched in the eighteen provinces, we shall, it is declared, provide a vast number of consumers with the means of purchasing our goods, and thereby create new and profitable markets for our manufactures.

These are optimistic dreams, between which and the possibility of their realization many obstacles are placed. China does not present one, but many questions. The links in the chain of barriers which checks freedom of foreign intercourse are numerous, and each of them represents a formidable impediment. There is, in the first place, a commercial question involving the consideration of many factors, amongst which the immense power of the native guilds and the competition of the Chinese operative are not the least important. Then there is the missionary question, which is bound up with the whole history of China's foreign relations and goes to the very root of the causes of her implacable hostility to the West. And lastly, the political rivalries and jealousies of the interested Powers have to be taken into account and weighed in the balance.

Besides these minor considerations, there is the vast question of China herself: the constitution of the country; the prejudices and customs of the population; and the economic conditions under which the people live. For these are the hinges upon which the whole future development of the problem is dependent. It is in the characteristics of the inhabitants, rather than in the potential wealth of their country, that a key to the final issue of the situation must be sought. Nobody has contested the fact that the Chinese are a sober and industrious nation, standing on a high level of civilization. It remains to be seen whether these qualities can be turned to the permanent advantage of Western countries; or if, having been imbued by us with the spirit of commercial enterprise, the Chinese will not use them for their own profit and succeed ultimately in driving European manufactures entirely out of the market.

CHAPTER II

A GLANCE AT CHINA'S RESOURCES

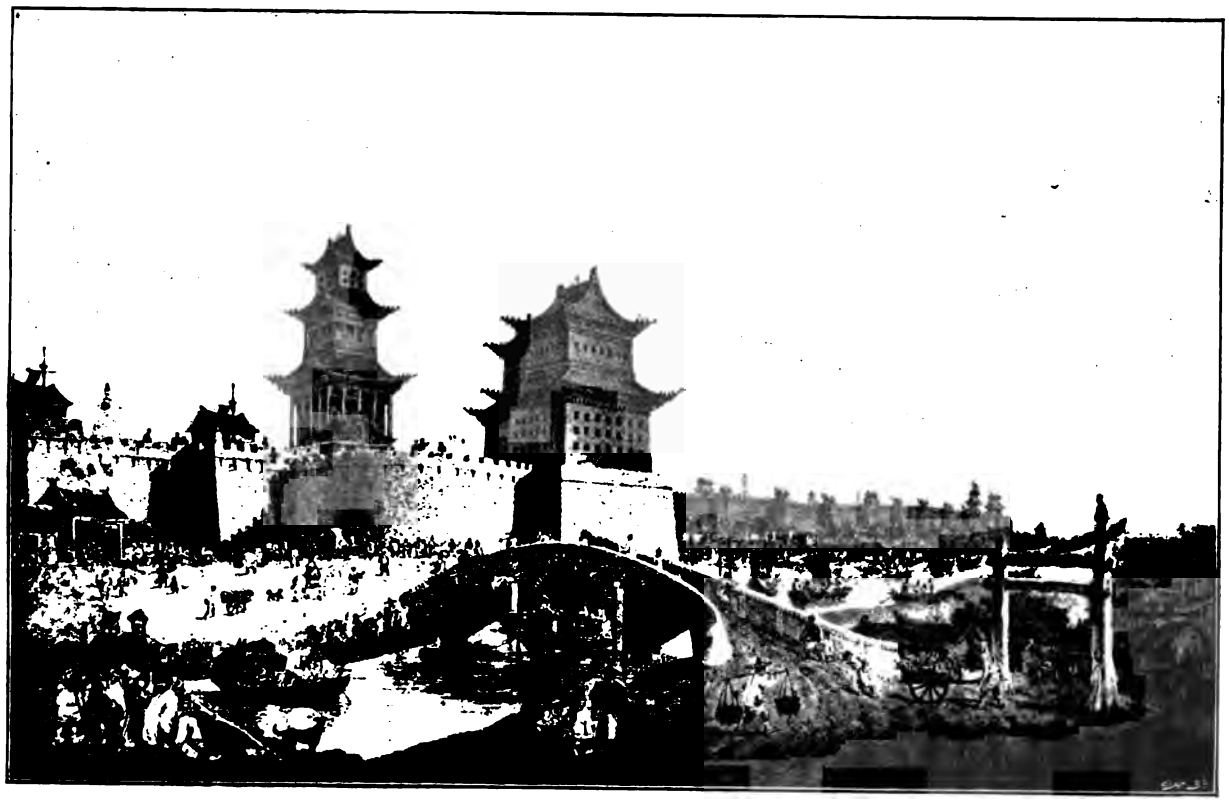
The Population of China Proper—The Metropolitan Province and Peking—Shantung and its Mineral Wealth—The Land of Coal and Iron—The Province of Shensi—The Province of Kansu—Kwangtung and Hong Kong Island—The Province of Fukien—The Province of Chekiang—Marco Polo's Description of Hangchow—The Province of Kwangsi—The Province of Yunnan.

WHEN it is taken into consideration that China Proper extends over an area as large as Europe west of the Russian frontiers, it will readily be understood that there are as many diversities amongst the inhabitants as may be found in the countries of the West. Regarding, however, the population of the eighteen provinces as a whole, a surprisingly high standard of civilization characterizes the greater part of the three hundred and fifty or four hundred millions by whom they are peopled. Although China has enjoyed almost a perfect immunity from foreign wars, with which she has latterly become more familiarized on further acquaintance with Western nations, rebellions and occasional civil wars have at times seriously depopulated several of her provinces. The consequence has been that numbers of emigrants from different parts of the empire have flocked to the desolated districts, and settled there; with the natural result, that instead of a homogeneous population, these provinces contain a collection of diverse clans and races, which have little in common with each other. These conditions, however, are generally to be met with in mountainous districts, where the settlers

in detached valleys have been prevented by natural barriers from intermingling to any great extent.

China Proper is divided into two portions by the great Yang-tse river, the basin of which, although it contains an enormous area formed by some of the most productive districts in the empire, is generally looked upon—in addition to the province of Yunnan, which forms the eastern boundary of Burma—as constituting the British sphere of interest. The detailed description of this central belt may be reserved for separate treatment; leaving, for preliminary examination, those parts of the country which lie outside the Yang-tse valley.

The metropolitan province of Chihli, which is situated within the grasp of Russia at the extreme north-east of China Proper, is about five times as large as Belgium. In spite of the mountain ranges which more or less cover the northern half of the province, Chihli is easily accessible from the Mongolian side. Whatever protection the Great Wall may have afforded when China possessed a better military organization, and modern armaments did not exist to upset the antiquated tactics of the Chinese generals, it is now, in the absence of proper fortifications, of no use whatever for defensive purposes. As a matter of fact, the physical disposition of the country affords a ready passage to the large caravan traffic which passes through to the northern parts of the empire. It is remarkable that the imperial city should have been singled out as the scene of the most detested Western innovations. In 1897 a railway was opened from Tientsin to the capital, a distance of 73 miles; and a line has also been constructed between the latter and Pao-ting. The railway which formerly existed between Tongku and the Kaiping coal mines has been extended, under the supervision of English engineers, for a distance of 300 miles in the direction of Manchuria. These are the only railways which are at the present moment open to traffic in China; and all of them have been laid down within the boundaries of Chihli. The first rail-



WESTERN GATES OF PEKING.

road in China joined Shanghai and its port Woosung; but in 1877 the line was acquired by the Chinese and destroyed.* Peking has been more often described than almost any other eastern city, and therefore needs but little comment here. Like most great towns elsewhere, it presents strong contrasts of luxurious wealth and miserable poverty. When the capital was visited by Lord Macartney in 1793 the number of inhabitants was estimated at three millions; but it is not supposed to contain now more than seven or eight hundred thousand. The magnificence and beauty of the city may be gathered from the accompanying illustration of the approach to one of its western gates; but the picturesque battlements would be of little avail against modern weapons, in spite of cardboard cannon and a plentiful supply of bows and arrows.

One of the most favoured of the Chinese provinces is Shantung. It not only comprises a fertile and thickly-populated portion of the Great Plain, which forms a broad belt from the mountainous district north of Peking to the Yang-tse basin in the south, but is also extraordinarily rich in mineral products. Splendid coalfields exist throughout the province, and several pits in active operation supply the neighbouring towns with fuel of the best possible quality. There is also an immense quantity of iron ore, which has not been touched by the native inhabitants, the merit of exploitation having been left to German enterprise. In addition to a flourishing agriculture, a great deal of silk is produced in Shantung. The population is most intelligent and highly civilized. The men are thin and wiry, and have supplied the Chinese navy with many of its best recruits. They have acquired a great reputation for morality, and are generally well-disposed towards strangers; which, as Richthofen observes, makes travelling in Shantung particularly pleasant. A special interest attaches to this province, for it was down in the plains of Shantung that Confucius laboured in the interests of humanity, and achieved

* This line has been rebuilt, and is just completed.

such marvellous results for the moral welfare of his fellow-countrymen. His descendants, upon whom has been conferred the rare honour of a hereditary title, are still living—twenty-four centuries after the death of their great ancestor—at the place of his birth.

Shansi has been called the land of coal and iron. Its wealth of coal in particular is so enormous, that Richthofen declares the resources of Shansi could supply the whole world for thousands of years at the present rate of consumption. For many centuries Shansi has supplied the neighbouring provinces with coal and iron; and if the Chinese should be transformed into an industrial nation at the instigation of European advisers, the increased demand for the latter material could be met in great part by this district alone. Shansi is not favourable to agriculture, and the northern parts of the province resemble the steppes of Central Asia in their barrenness. Nevertheless, the inhabitants enjoy a great reputation, not only as being extremely enterprising and industrious, but for their peculiar commercial ability. The banks of Shansi are famous throughout China, and possess their branches in almost every part of the empire. It is said that the Shansi bankers have complete command of the money-market in China. Education in Shansi is universal, and most of the mercantile houses in the towns of northern China are supplied by this province with clerks and accountants. The preference for commercial pursuits has, on the other hand, entirely crushed any military spirit; the people are unwarlike, and wedded so firmly to their peaceful pursuits, that few of them care to enter for the public examinations and compete for the generally coveted distinction of the mandarinate.

The neighbouring province of Shensi is mainly distinguished by the fertility of the Wei valley in its southern portion. A great deal of corn is grown there, and the richness of the harvests obtained by the farmers attracted, at an early period of history, immigrants from the unproductive regions of Central

Asia. In the Wei valley lies the old imperial capital, Si-ngan-fu. It numbers at the present day a million inhabitants, and forms an important political and commercial centre for the north-west of China. The northern portion of the province, which is separated from the southern half by a broad belt of high mountains, is widely different in character. Although the soil possesses much less fertility than in the south, there is considerable wealth in coal. Communication between the two divisions of the province is, however, extremely difficult on account of the formidable nature of the Tsin-ling passes; a contingency which saved the Wei valley from devastation during the Mohammedan rebellion which raged in Kansu and in the northern half of Shensi from 1862 to 1871.

The strategical importance of the province of Kansu is very considerable, its position at the extreme north-west corner of China Proper having made it the commercial highway for traffic passing to and from Central Asia. The northern part of the province consists principally of high tableland, containing an abundance of coal. The capital, Lan-chu, is situated at an elevation of at least 4000 feet, and the vast mountain ranges which stretch across the country to the south reach high altitudes. Kansu contains the largest area of any of the eighteen provinces, being more than double the size of the United Kingdom. As no two authorities agree about Chinese statistics, it is difficult to determine the exact population of each province; but there is no doubt that Kansu, in spite of its soil being favourable to agriculture, is very sparsely populated in relation to its size. The tobacco and opium grown in Kansu is much prized by the Chinese, and certain products of the mountainous districts have attained a considerable celebrity in other parts of the empire.

There are four provinces in the south of China which may be said to lie outside the area of the Yang-tse basin. Of these the best known to Englishmen is the province of Kwangtung, off

the coast of which, directly opposite to the port of Canton, which has played so promiment a part in the history of British relations with China, lies the island of Hong Kong, with the neighbouring territories recently leased to Great Britain. The broad valleys of its mountainous districts and the fertile plain lands are thickly populated. A warm climate and abundant rainfall enable farmers to produce several rich crops in the year. Rice is the principal product; besides which, there are tea plantations and silk-worm industries. It is also stated that China obtains her sugar supplies almost exclusively from this province. There are several different races to be found in Kwangtung; but the inhabitants of Canton in particular are said to be the most intelligent, enterprising, and artistic of all other Chinese. The familiar blue and white porcelain, and most objects of Chinese art with which we have long been familiar in Europe, are almost invariably manufactured by the Cantonese.

A word in this place relative to Hong Kong may not be inappropriate. The unhealthy climate of the island, which has more than once been visited by pestilential outbreaks, would in any case have precluded its conversion into a British colony. The original intention of the British government in obtaining its cession from the Chinese was, however, to use the island as a base for defensive and commercial purposes. The plan has been consistently followed ever since; and although the authorities had to encounter many difficulties at the outset, owing to the low class of Chinese who migrated across from Canton to escape justice at the hands of their own countrymen, they have succeeded, as everybody knows, in making Hong Kong the centre, not only of China's foreign trade, but of transhipment to many other parts. Its value as a military or naval station has not been so apparent; and it has not been suggested that the recent acquisitions of 1898 on the mainland will lead to a strengthening of our position, such as may give us that predominance in Chinese waters which

we do not appear, in the light of recent events, to have possessed.

The province of Fukien, which lies next to Kwangtung on the coast line, is a well-watered and fertile district, intersected by several large rivers. There was formerly a flourishing agriculture; but the competition of India, and the native likin tax, have nearly killed the tea trade. The proportion of plainland in the mountainous regions of Fukien is small, but a densely-packed population is concentrated on the large area of flat country. The valleys, irrigated with fresh mountain water, grow splendid crops of rice, and are well peopled in consequence. The province of Fukien possesses two treaty ports: Fuchow and Amoy. The latter town lies opposite the island of Formosa, which formed part of the war indemnity in 1895 and now belongs to Japan.

The inhabitants on the coast of Chekiang, the adjoining province, are racially connected with the maritime population of Fukien; but in the interior of both provinces they are split up into clans and tribes according to the different valleys to which they belong. The people of Ningpo, a treaty port lying exactly opposite to the Chusan islands which have more than once been occupied by Great Britain, stand on a high plane of culture, and enjoy a great reputation for industry and enterprise. Chekiang possesses in general the same natural advantages as the neighbouring province of Fukien; but in addition to the fertile valleys common to both, the former has the advantage of containing the richest and most productive section of the Great Plain. In addition to this favoured spot being the greatest silk-producing district of the whole world, it is the site of the famous city of Hangchow, which, since the Japanese war, has been opened to foreign commerce. This town was described by Marco Polo in the thirteenth century as being "beyond dispute the finest and noblest in the world." A brief excerpt from his own words, as translated by Yule, will give the reader some idea—even allowing for the possible

exaggerations from which few travellers can boast immunity—of what Chinese civilization is capable:—

First and foremost, the city is so great, that it hath an hundred miles of compass. And there are in it twelve thousand bridges of stone, for the most part so lofty that a great fleet could pass beneath them. And let no man marvel that there are so many bridges, for you see that the whole city stands as it were in the water and surrounded by water, so that a great many bridges are required to give free passage about it. And though the bridges be so high, the approaches are so well contrived that carts and horses do cross them.

There are in this city twelve guilds of the different crafts, and each guild has twelve thousand houses in the occupation of its workmen. Each of these houses contains at least twelve men, whilst some contain twenty, and some forty—not that these are all masters, but inclusive of the journeymen who work under the masters. And yet all these craftsmen had full occupation, for many other cities of the kingdom are supplied from this city with what they require. . . .

You must know also that the city of Kinsay (Hangchow) has some three hundred baths, the water of which is supplied by springs. They are hot baths, and the people take great delight in them, frequenting them several times a month, for they are very cleanly in their persons. They are the finest and largest baths in the world, large enough for one hundred persons to bathe together. . . .

In this part are the ten principal markets, though besides these there are a vast number of others in different parts of the town. The former are all squares of half a mile to the side, and along their front passes the main street, which is forty paces in width, and runs straight from end to end of the city, crossing many bridges of easy and commodious approach. At every four miles of its length comes one of those great squares of two miles in compass. In each of these squares is held a market three days in the week, frequented by forty or fifty thousand persons, who bring thither for sale every possible necessary of life, so that there is always an ample supply of every kind of meat and game, and of ducks and geese an infinite quantity. . . .

The natives of the city are men of peaceful character, both from education, and from the example of their king, whose disposition was the same. They know nothing of handling arms, and keep none in their houses. You hear of no feuds or noisy quarrels, or dissensions of any kind, among them. Both in their commercial dealings and in their manufactures they are thoroughly honest and truthful, and there is such a degree of good-will and neighbourly attachment among both men and women, that you would take the people who live in the same street to be all one family.

Hangchow is still considered to be one of the finest cities in the Chinese Empire; but it has long lost the importance it possessed some centuries ago, and the ravages caused by the Taiping rebellion have materially reduced the number of its inhabitants. It forms the terminus of the Grand Canal, which connects the city with Tientsin, a distance of about 700 English miles.

West of Kwangtung lies the province of Kwangsi. It was here that the Taiping rebellion was originated by a Christian sect of natives in 1850, and traces of the desolation created by it are still visible. The inhabitants are lazy and thriftless. They are satisfied with growing sufficient rice for their own consumption, and have no commercial enterprise whatever, being contented to leave the profits of any trade there may be to Cantonese merchants. The population consists chiefly of Shan tribes, who have little in common with the Chinese, and are on an altogether lower plane of civilization. The country ought to possess a thriving trade and agriculture. Its chief physical features are undulating plains, framed in high mountain ranges, which are intersected by the West river and its numberless tributaries. The means of irrigation are, therefore, everywhere to hand, and communications to all parts of the province are easy and abundant.

In the south-west corner of China, situated on the confines of Burma, lies the province of Yunnan, through the extreme northern portion of which the Yang-tse river flows. Opinions have differed considerably as to the commercial value of Yunnan. The sparsity of the population, which is chiefly engaged in growing rice and opium, is due to the ravages caused by the Mohammedan rebellion; and besides this original source of poverty, there is the difficulty of establishing proper intercommunication, caused by the natural geographical disadvantages of the province. Its position should make Yunnan a great commercial highway between China and the countries lying beyond its western and southern boundaries; but the broken

nature of the ground, the deeply indented valleys, and the impassable gorges through which the rivers mostly flow, have so far proved sufficiently deterrent obstacles. There is, however, no reason why Yunnan should not become one of the most important and prosperous provinces in the Chinese Empire. The immense mineral resources of the land have been known since the earliest times. Marco Polo, who visited the province, speaks of the abundance and comparative cheapness of gold in Yunnan; there are extensive tin mines, which, before the Mohammedan rebellion, gave employment to 100,000 men; and, in addition to several other valuable products, the province is rich in coal and iron. The position of Yunnan, contiguous for more than a thousand miles with our Burmese frontier, defines it distinctly as coming within the political sphere which should be dominated by Great Britain. But its southern limits lie on the confines of Tongking, and, as everybody is aware, France is making strenuous efforts to obtain paramount influence in the province.

CHAPTER III

THE YANG-TSE VALLEY

The British Sphere of Influence—Course of the Yang-tse Kiang—The richest Province in China—Contrasting Poverty of Kweichow—Hupeh and the great Emporium of Trade—The Province of Hunan—The Province of Kiangsi—The Province of Ngan-whei and Kiangsu—The Commercial Metropolis—Posting Infants—The Province of Honan—The Commercial Future of the Yang-tse Valley.

THE Yang-tse Kiang, or "Great River," as it is called in some parts by the Chinese, traverses the entire breadth of China Proper, which it divides into two nearly equal portions. The total length of this gigantic waterway is estimated at 2,900 miles; while the enormous area of 548,000 square miles—a space in which the German Empire, France, Great Britain and Ireland could be comfortably accommodated—measures the extent of the Yang-tse basin. This vast expanse of country does not, however, represent the limits recently claimed for British influence by our ambassador at Peking, who demanded the recognition by the Tsungli Yamên of "the Yang-tse region, and the provinces adjoining the Yang-tse," as constituting the area of British interest. It was recently announced in the House of Commons that this liberal definition may be taken to include the basins of the Yang-tse's tributaries, and we therefore find ourselves dominating—or attempting to dominate—territories comprising not less than 700,000 square miles, exclusive of the province of Yunnan.

From its sources on the eastern side of Tibet, the Upper

Yang-tse flows through magnificent gorges and ravines down to the important trading centre of Ichang, in the province of Hupeh. At this point the river flows out into a broad valley, and continues its course, which for a couple of hundred miles is very tortuous, between high embankments in varying stages of dilapidation for the remaining distance of nearly one thousand miles to the mouth of its estuary near Shanghai.

Before the Japanese war, steam navigation was only permitted on the Yang-tse for the thousand miles up to Ichang. But a clause in the Treaty of Shimonoseki provided for the removal of this prohibition; and the Upper Yang-tse, in accordance with the "favoured nation clause," was theoretically opened to the steam traffic of all nations. The credit of demonstrating the feasibility of piloting steamboats through the rapids above Ichang belongs to Mr Archibald Little, who, early in 1898, ascended the river from Shanghai to Chung-king in a small steamer specially built for the occasion. The saving of time and expense is, of course, enormous. The journey to Ichang may be accomplished in a week; and the actual number of days occupied by Mr Little in steaming from that point to Chung-king, a distance of five hundred miles (necessitating the passing of thirteen big rapids and seventy-two minor ones), was eleven; although the same amount of time was lost in the delays and accidents inseparable from a pioneering expedition of that kind.

The province of Szechuan, which is the western limit of the Yang-tse valley in China Proper, is the richest and most populated of the eighteen provinces. A Russian census has estimated the number of inhabitants at over seventy millions, while Mr Bourne's calculations have not placed it higher than between forty-five and fifty-five millions; but, as has already been remarked, it is hopeless to attempt to arrive at approximate figures when such conflicting statements are made by competent authorities. The principal feature of the country is Richthofen's basin, formed of red sandstone, which occupies

A TEMPLE IN NANKING

about two-thirds of the total area, and is framed in a setting of high mountain ranges, intersected by deep ravines and valleys. It is here that the great mass of the population is settled. The district is one of extraordinary fertility, and it is said that it would take ten years for the inhabitants to consume the produce of one. There is, in fact, no other province as rich in products as Szechuan. Rice, wheat, opium, cotton, and vegetables of varying kinds, are grown in abundance; besides which, iron, salt, and petroleum are produced in the red basin; and in addition to coal, the minerals in the mountain districts comprise lead, copper, silver, and gold. As elsewhere in China, this mineral wealth has been left practically untouched. The coal, which is worked, however, to a considerable extent, is only used as fuel for native consumption, the steamers on the Yang-tse being supplied with Japanese coal, in spite of the rich stores which lie almost everywhere to hand. A spot of remarkable fertility is the Cheng-tu plain, situated in the red basin, and admirably irrigated by a network of rivers and canals. It is celebrated throughout China on account of its prosperous cities and villages; but the great trading centre of the province is Chung-king, the most important commercial town in Western China. In the western ranges of Szechuan there are numerous aboriginal tribes; the great bulk, however, of the population, descended chiefly from emigrants out of all the neighbouring provinces, are highly cultivated and peaceable Chinese, who have been described as uniting the best qualities of the various elements from which they trace their lineage.

A great contrast to the wealth and fertility of Szechuan is presented by the neighbouring province of Kweichow. Without actually lacking natural advantages, the greater part of the province is not favourable either to agriculture or mining enterprise. Richthofen, in fact, alludes to the mineral products of Kweichow as being insignificant; though other explorers qualified to pronounce an opinion have taken a more favourable view. The majority of the inhabitants are not Chinese, but belong to

Lolo, Shan, and other aboriginal tribes. Of the latter, however, it has been said that they stand by no means on a low plane of civilization, but are orderly people and excellent farmers. The article chiefly exported from this province is opium, and there is also a by no means inconsiderable silk industry. But, although an important and much frequented road leads from Hunan through Kweichow to Yunnan, the communications in general are so bad that no great development of trade can take place until some improvement has been introduced by the provincial government. It is on this account, probably, that so few immigrants have been attracted to the province, in spite of repeated efforts on the part of the authorities to induce settlers to come over from other districts.

Of far greater commercial importance to this country is the province of Hupeh, into which the Yang-tse flows through the celebrated gorges below Kwei-chow-fu. Here, at the junction of the Han with the main stream, lies Hankow, which is the greatest centre of distribution in the Chinese Empire. Huc describes the city as one great shop, and in his day estimated its population, combined with that of the two closely adjoining towns of Hanyang and Wuchang, at eight millions; but most modern authorities are agreed in regarding the Abbé's figures as an unintentional exaggeration. At the present time the three cities are not considered to contain so much as a million. Water communications exist from Hankow to every part of the empire, the southern provinces being served by the rivers flowing out of the Tung-ting and Poyang lakes and their innumerable branches, while an admirable system of canals leads to all parts of the north of China. The great disadvantage under which Hupeh labours is the inundations to which the flat country is subjected, in spite of the extensive dam-works built on either bank of the Yang-tse. Every year, however, the inundated lands are steadily raised by a curious natural process. The quantities of mud brought down by the river leave a rich alluvial deposit on the earth after the water

has been drained off. These annual deposits gradually heighten the level of the soil, and their fertility is so great that winter crops are raised on them. The inhabitants are mostly farmers, cotton being the chief product in this district. In spite of the fertility of the land, however, the livelihood gained by agriculture is extremely precarious. Every ten years or so there is a great inundation, which causes incalculable damage over a vast area, and those who have not been fortunate enough to save a nest-egg, by way of insurance, are generally ruined altogether through the total loss of their property.

To the south lies the province of Hunan, which is especially fortunate in possessing plentiful communications in the shape of navigable rivers and streams. These waterways were once considered as constituting some of the most important arteries of the empire, being a medium of communication between Canton and the north-western part of China. But the fast-growing importance of the Yang-tse river, since it has been opened to steam navigation, is working a revolution in the system of traffic, and Hunan is consequently losing its prestige as a commercial centre. It is the most conservative province in China, and the population is so anti-foreign, that it is extremely dangerous for a European to venture among them. A large proportion of the literati is furnished by Hunan, which is also the birthplace of the famous Tsêng Kwofan, the father of the late Marquis Tsêng.

There is not much land cultivation in the province of Kiangsi, the inhabitants of which are principally engaged in manufactures. A flourishing trade is carried on in paper and porcelain, the numerous rivers affording easy communications in all directions. The only product of importance is green tea. A large population is supported by commerce, for which the people, who are the opposite in character of their neighbours in Hunan, display considerable genius. The trade on the Lower Yang-tse is, in fact, largely in the hands of Kiangsi merchants. Huc regarded Kiangsi as a desert, and in his day mandarins were sent

there by the government as a punishment, much as the younger sons of English families are now sent out to the unhealthy districts of the West Coast of Africa.

Through the lake district of Eastern Hupeh the Yang-tse passes into the province of Ngan-whei, and thence to Kiangsu where it is discharged into the Yellow Sea. These two districts once formed one province, which was called Kiangnan, a name still used in some parts. Careful drainage has developed in them an enormous fertility, and they now possess one of the richest agricultures and densest populations of China. The scenery is very fine; besides the alluvial plains on the river-banks, there are hilly ranges, between which run broad valleys, rich in all kinds of products. There is little tea cultivation; but a great quantity of rice, cotton, and silk is exported. The water communications of these provinces are on a magnificent scale, the Grand Canal running through the entire length of Kiangsu. The population of both provinces has suffered immensely through the Taiping rebellion; but the millions sacrificed during that civil war have been replaced by immigrants from other districts. The people stand in high repute for their learning and culture.

Near the estuary of the Yang-tse Kiang is situated the ancient capital of the empire, Nanking, which is the burial place of the first Ming emperor; though most travellers have erroneously stated that the tombs of the whole dynasty are to be found there. Lower down lies the British concession of Chin-kiang, at the junction of the river with the Grand Canal. But by far the most important town in this corner of the empire is the commercial metropolis of Shanghai. The great bulk of foreign trade, which until the opium war was concentrated solely at Canton, passes through Shanghai, which is the port of entry for the Yang-tse river, as well as being a place of transhipment to other parts of the empire. Situated near the outskirts of the town there is, or was, a structure, furnished with a large slit, somewhat after the fashion of our

AN ARCHWAY IN NANKING

pillar-boxes, in which the Chinese were—and perhaps are still —accustomed to post their superfluous infants. The misery and poverty in some of the treaty ports, where the lowest classes have been demoralized, must not, however, be taken as being indicative of the state of society in less sophisticated neighbourhoods.

A slice of the province of Honan lies in the basin of the Yellow river, and yields, when not inundated, rich harvests. In this part of the district is situated the town of Kai-fong, which for several centuries was the imperial capital and witnessed the rise and fall of many of the smaller dynasties. This north-east corner of the province contains a portion of the Great Plain, and the population is, on account of its fertility, extremely dense. Cotton and wheat are here grown in abundance; which is also the case in the south, where Honan encompasses a portion of the plain of Hupeh.

The enormous commercial value of the Yang-tse basin must be apparent to everybody. It is the key which unlocks commerce in every part of the empire. The bulk of the foreign trade goes to Shanghai, at the mouth of the Yang-tse; and from there it is distributed throughout the entire country north of the twenty-fifth degree of latitude, which merely excludes two or three of the southern provinces served by Canton and the West river. In addition to this, there is the immense central depôt of Hankow, to which ocean steamers are allowed access, and whence goods are transhipped to the inland provinces. Almost the whole of the Chinese trade may be said to pass through Hankow; and although foreign goods destined for Szechuan merchants are purchased by their agents directly in Shanghai, still the north-west and south-west are supplied from this centre, which is at the same time the medium of export for the provinces of Honan and Kweichow.

It is obvious that when the resources of China are fully developed—when coal shafts have been sunk, and the untouched mineral wealth exploited, and when a proper stimulus has been

thereby given to industry and commerce—an unparalleled trade will pass through these two great distributing centres. Merchants and manufacturers will amass fortunes hitherto undreamt of in China, and the wages of the industrial population will be largely increased. But to what extent foreign enterprise is likely to benefit by this metamorphosis, and what may be the result of stimulating the Chinese—as they undoubtedly will be stimulated—to forsake the small profits of agriculture for the more dazzling prospects of industry and commerce, are questions which provide considerable food for reflection.

CHAPTER IV

THE RECORDS OF THE PAST

Prehistoric Times—The first Emperors—Chinese Philosophers—The Burning of the Literature—Early Progress—A Chinese Cæsar—A Woman Ruler—The Sung Dynasty—The Mongol Conquest—The Ming Emperors—The growing Power of the Manchus—Conquest of China—The first Tsing Emperor—A glorious Reign—The Emperor Kien Lung—The Taiping Rebellion—Two Minorities—The Empress-Dowager—The Reigning Sovereign.

ONE may gather from their mythology that the primitive Chinese possessed a remarkably shrewd notion of the gradual evolution of mankind. The founders of Chinese civilization are narrated to have been specially inspired emperors, whose individual reigns lasted for many thousands of years. The immense antiquity of the world is among Western nations a comparatively recent discovery; but, although Chinese thinkers could not have based their theories on geological science, they seem at any rate to have grasped the probability that the human race must have taken more than six thousand years to develop a complicated social organization. We find, therefore, the emperors of Heaven, the Earth, and of Man, reigning in succession over a period of more than eighty thousand years. These are followed by other mythical rulers, who are supposed to have instituted domestic life, marriage, and other rudiments of civilized existence.

The first tangible monarch is Hwang-ti, who reigned during the twenty-seventh century before the Christian era. He built roads, invented ships, and organized the empire into

administrative departments. Under the rule of one of his descendants occurred a great flood, caused by the overflowing of the Yellow river, which people have sometimes attempted to identify with the flood of Noah. It required nine years' incessant labour to bring the river back to its normal state. This was accomplished by Yu, one of the most conscientious emperors who ever ruled over the Chinese. His sense of responsibility was so great, that he is said to have often exclaimed: "Are the people cold? then it is I who am the cause. Are they hungry?

WINTER CLOTHING

it is my fault. Do they commit any crime? I ought to consider myself the culprit."* This remarkable man lived more than two thousand years B.C.

The first of the great philosophers and reformers of China was born six centuries before the Christian era. Like all other advanced thinkers, however, Laoutse was neglected by his own generation. A similar fate was accorded, under the same

* D. C. Boulger, "The History of China," vol. i., p. 5.

dynasty, to Confucius and Mencius. It was not until many centuries had passed that full recognition was given to the immense services of the former, by posterity conferring upon him the title of "King of Literature." The Chow dynasty, which had witnessed the birth of three of China's greatest men, was succeeded by that of the Tsins (255—202 B.C.). The greatest emperor provided by the latter was Chi Hwang-ti, who abolished feudalism and built the Great Wall, which put a stop to Tartar inroads and to this day bears testimony to the engineering skill of his times. Unfortunately, however, a more unpleasing achievement is also recorded to his memory. The outcome of a prolonged struggle against the fossil conservatism of the literati was an abominable act of Vandalism on the part of Hwang-ti, who burnt nearly all the Chinese classics for the purpose of destroying objectionable precedent.

A splendid record is contained in the annals of the Han dynasty, which dominated the empire for more than four hundred years, the latter half of which period coincided with the beginning of our Christian era. Under great and beneficent rulers an astonishing progress was made by the Chinese. Flourishing cities grew up; free education was universally established; communications and bridges were built, giving access to all parts of the country; and new provinces were added to the domains of the empire. Of the Han sovereigns the most distinguished was Vouti. He conquered the three provinces Fukien, Yunnan, and Szechuan; and, foreseeing with prophetic instinct future danger to the empire in the restless Tartar tribes beyond the northern frontiers, he impressed upon his ministers before he died the necessity of pursuing to the end the war which he had been carrying on against them. Wenti, the grandfather of this monarch, also deserves mention. He wisely repealed the edict which had been issued by Chi Hwang-ti withdrawing the privileges of censorship, as he considered that public criticisms on the government were valuable in indicating the sentiments of the people.

The Hans were succeeded by several more or less short-lived dynasties, extending over a period of nearly four hundred years. In the seventh century of our era the Dragon Throne was won by the Tangs, who gave to China the greatest emperor by whom she has ever been governed. Taitsong the Great, as he is justly called by the Chinese, was not only one of the foremost captains in the world's history, but distinguished himself by the statesmanship and wisdom of his domestic legislation. As a soldier and administrator, Mr Boulger places the emperor Taitsong on a level with Cæsar. The famous Hanlin College, or Chinese Academy of Letters, which exercises so important an influence over national life and politics, was founded by this great ruler.

A curious analogy to the position of the present empress-dowager was furnished by one of Taitsong's widows, who married Kaotsung, the son and successor of her former husband. She was a woman of few scruples and unbounded ambition, and the ascendancy she gained over her lover was so great that he ultimately resigned the power completely into her hands. Her first use of authority was to clear inconvenient obstacles out of the way; and it was not until the empress, forty years later, was enfeebled by illness and the weight of old age that her enemies succeeded in wresting the insignia of power from her grasp.

Several petty dynasties came after the Tangs, until a clever and ambitious minister, named Chow Kwang Yu, usurped the throne and founded the great line of Sung emperors. Under the first of these new rulers the empire was reunited and solidified; but latterly it became split up into two kingdoms, the South and the North, with rival dynasties at the head of each. In spite of incessant Tartar wars and civil strife, the Chinese made great material progress at this period of their history. During the reign of one of the Sung emperors, about the time of the Norman conquest in Great Britain, an experiment in socialism was made by the Chinese government

at the instigation of an enthusiastic reformer. Like most visionary schemes of the kind, it proved a complete failure; and immediately after the death of its inventor an imperial edict was issued prohibiting the use of his writings.

The fall of the Sungs, after a prosperous and beneficial rule of three centuries, was brought about by the Mongol conquest of China towards the end of the thirteenth century, after a prolonged and persistent invasion, which was commenced by the terrible Genghis Khan and completed by his grandson. The latter ascended the throne, under the title of Kublai Khan, as the first emperor of the Yuen dynasty. His name has long been familiar throughout Europe as the Great Khan of Marco Polo's travels in the East. A century, however, after they had established themselves in China, the Mongols were overthrown and expelled. With the death of Kublai their rulers degenerated and relaxed the vigour of their administration; and the Chinese, who had never been properly subjugated, seized the opportunity to emancipate themselves from the Tartar yoke.

The man to whose patriotism and genius the expulsion of the Mongol usurpers was due mounted the throne he had won, under the title of Hongwou, as the founder of the celebrated dynasty of the Mings. For nearly two hundred and fifty years the Ming emperors ruled over the Chinese Empire. During their tenure of power the population recovered in a great measure from the devastation caused by the Tartar struggle, although the security of the throne was constantly menaced by minor insurrections and civil wars. The establishment of national granaries was a boon conferred upon the people of China under the Ming dynasty. Large stores of grain were accumulated in them during years of prosperity, in order to provide for the terrible famines by which Eastern countries are periodically visited. At the close of the sixteenth century, during the last fifty years of Ming rule, the first Catholic missionaries arrived in China. They did not achieve any

signal success at that period, but seem to have been kindly treated by the Court; and when Father Ricci, the most famous of them, died in 1610, he left behind him monuments of his zeal and of Ming tolerance in the shape of several churches in various parts of the empire.

The commencement of the seventeenth century marked a critical period in the history of China. North-east of the Liao-tung peninsula was settled a Tartar tribe, consisting of several independent clans, among which was that of the Manchus. Under the military genius of a Manchu leader these separate and hostile clans were welded together, forming an organized and well-drilled army of over forty thousand picked men. But it was not until they invaded the Liao-tung peninsula that the Chinese government paid any attention to a danger which they regarded as insignificant. Unprepared for the attack, and harassed by rebellions in other parts of the empire, the Chinese were not able at first to resist the advancing tide; but the skill of one of their generals, and the timely death of the Manchu leader, saved the situation. The successor of the deceased chieftain, however, continued the policy of his predecessor; and, although he was not destined to be the conqueror of China, he strengthened the power of the Manchus and paved the way for their ultimate triumph.

Curiously enough, the opportunity for the Manchus to establish themselves as conquerors at Peking was afforded them by the Chinese general who had been their most formidable opponent. A rebellion, originated by a band of what were little better than robbers, had ended in the death of the last Ming emperor and the usurpation of the throne by the rebel chief. Unable to cope with the latter single-handed, Wou Sankwei, the commander of the imperial forces, invited the Manchus to assist him in the task. The chance was eagerly seized, and the complete victory of the allied armies over the rebels was followed by the firm establishment of the Manchus at Peking.

The present Tsing, or "Pure," dynasty was in this perfidious

manner placed upon the Dragon Throne in the person of Chunche, the youthful son of the great Manchu chieftain Taitsong. Although Chunche gave promise of possessing excellent qualities, his death at a comparatively early age prevented their full development; and he is chiefly distinguished as being the father of his successor, the great emperor Kanghi.

It would require a separate volume to do anything like justice to this enlightened Manchu ruler, who, in spite of the splendid achievements of his reign, was yet eclipsed by the still greater genius of his grandson. Under his guidance the empire was made secure, friendly relations established with neighbouring Powers, and Tibet annexed to the Crown. Greater even than his military prowess were his administrative gifts. He never neglected the interests of his humblest subjects, employing Jesuit missionaries to travel all over the empire and report to him on the condition and needs of the various provinces. These missionaries were openly protected by him; he assigned to them a residence close to his own palace, and encouraged them in every possible way. By his instructions a vast encyclopædia, consisting of 5,020 volumes, was compiled by Chinese scholars. A copy of this work is in the possession of the British Museum authorities; and as only one hundred sets of the original edition were printed it is becoming extremely rare. Kanghi himself was possessed of considerable literary abilities, and one of the most esteemed works among the Chinese classics is his "Sixteen Sacred Maxims," which plays an important *rôle* at all competitive examinations. The study of some of these maxims would not be unbeneficial to the people of the West. "Cultivate peace and concord in your neighbourhood, in order to prevent quarrels and litigation," is an excellent piece of advice; and every householder might profit by the sound adage: "Pay your taxes promptly and fully, in order to avoid urgent demands for your quota." This emperor was a great sportsman, as well as a savant. He had his park filled with wild animals, and one of his chief recreations was to

stalk a tiger single-handed. It was on one of these excursions that he contracted a fatal chill. He died after having reigned prosperously for sixty-one years.

Kanghi was succeeded by his son Yung Ching, of whom there is little to be recorded beyond the fact that his justice and moderation made him an acceptable ruler. After a short reign of twelve years he became a "guest on high," leaving his eldest son to fill the vacant throne. Under Kien Lung, who may rank as one of the greatest emperors who have ever guided the destinies of the Chinese Empire, the Manchus reached the summit of their power and prestige. His administration was chiefly remarkable for the prosecution of a vigorous foreign policy; and the latter part of his reign may be characterized as a succession of wars, in most of which he came off with flying colours. The Tartar question, which for centuries had harassed every Chinese government, was finally and permanently disposed of by the resolute measures taken by Kien Lung; while the troubles which arose on the south-western frontiers were put down with a firm hand. A complete victory was also obtained by the emperor over the Goorkhas, who had invaded Tibet. The Goorkhas appealed to India for assistance; and the action of the East India company on that occasion, being misinterpreted by the Chinese, brought about the prohibition to foreigners of entry into Tibet—an interdiction which has remained in force ever since.

Kien Lung was as hostile to foreign missionaries as his illustrious grandfather had been indulgent. One of his first acts was to issue an edict forbidding his subjects to practise the Christian religion, and at the same time restricting the missionary's sphere to secular teaching. It must be pointed out in defence of his conduct that he undoubtedly had the wisdom to foresee the danger of propagating doctrines which would necessitate the uprooting of the most cherished national institutions, and which would lead to the undermining of his own imperial authority. On the other hand, it is remarkable

that he was the first Chinese monarch to grant an audience to a foreign embassy without insisting on the ceremonial to which objection was taken by Europeans. The history of the Macartney embassy and of China's foreign relations will, however, be dealt with later on. All that remains to be said of Kien Lung, within these small limits, is that after reigning for sixty-one years—the whole of a Chinese cycle—he abdicated in favour of a younger son in 1796; not wishing, as he himself stated, to remain longer upon the throne than his incomparable grandfather Kanghi.

Although Kiaking did not possess the qualities which distinguished his father, the empire was never more prosperous than during his reign. In spite, however, of the material welfare of the people, political discontent was visible everywhere; and it was at this period, in the first years of the nineteenth century, that the secret societies which have so long troubled China grew into existence. In 1821 he was succeeded by his son Taokwang, who reigned for thirty uneventful years, which were only remarkable on account of the steady increase of foreign complications. At the close of this period commenced the most terrible scourge which has visited China during the present century. The Taiping rebellion was originated by a Christian sect in the province of Kwangsi in 1850. Within three years the rebel chief had established himself as the founder of a new dynasty at the ancient capital of Nanking, and was in possession of one of the most fertile districts in China. It was not until 1864 that he was dislodged by the "ever-victorious army" under General Gordon, and an end put to the movement by his speedy execution. The greater part of the rebellion was in progress during the reign of Hienfung, the son of Taokwang; but this ruler was too occupied with the new relations forced upon him by European countries to cope effectively with the insurrection.

The conclusion of Hienfung's reign was followed by two prolonged minorities. The accession of Tungche, at the age of

six, brought into prominence a personality who for the last thirty-seven years has exercised a paramount voice in Chinese affairs. The late emperor had on his death-bed appointed a Board of eight regents to direct the affairs of the government. But a *coup d'état*, planned by the present empress-dowager, Prince Kung, and Hienfung's principal widow, upset the arrangement at the outset, and the regency was handed over to the two empresses. After fourteen years in leading-strings, the unhappy young emperor, who was beginning to show signs of independence, died in a convenient, though mysterious, manner. He left a young wife and an unborn child. Had the latter proved eventually to be a son, he would have succeeded to the throne, and his mother, the young empress Ahluta, would have held the reins of government during his minority.

Fortunately for the ambitions of the empress-dowager, Fate (which is under government control in China) once more conveniently interposed, and Tungche's widow died in time to avert the catastrophe. It now became necessary to cast about for a new heir to the throne, and the empresses began to look round for a harmless infant who would not be capable of interfering with their plans for many years to come. Prince Chun, a brother of the more famous Prince Kung, happening to possess a four-year-old son, the choice alighted upon this little nephew. He was placed upon the throne in 1875, under the title of Kwangsu, or Illustrious Succession; and everything went smoothly for the empress-dowager until the young monarch, in recent times, exhibited a fatal inclination to think for himself.

CHAPTER V

CHINESE CIVILIZATION

Antiquity of Civilization—Public Works—Shipbuilding—Ingenuity in Industrial Contrivances—Locomotion and Travelling—Running Postmen—Chinese Society—Corruption—Schools—Education—The Nine Classics—Public Readers—Immunity from Newspapers—Religious Principles—Respect for Confucius—The Treatment of Women—A Logical Test.

THE origin of Chinese civilization is lost in obscurity. Its immense antiquity may be gathered from the fact that historical records, which go back to nearly three thousand years before the Christian era, present the people of China in much the same state of culture as that in which they remain to-day. The present system of government dates from the reign of Chi Hwang-ti (about 230 B.C.), who originated the scheme of administration which has been followed by every succeeding dynasty for more than two thousand years. Immense progress was also made under the long line of Chow emperors when the agriculture of the country was largely developed under the direction of skilled officials, who were appointed to superintend irrigation works and to instruct the people in improved methods of cultivation. In this way the resources of the empire may be said to have been evolved. But for countless generations before the government took the material welfare of the population in hand in this patriarchal manner, the Chinese were a highly cultured people, with an established literature and an admirable social organization.

Monuments of the skill and industry of bygone ages have been handed down to posterity, as a living proof of the glory of past achievement, in the shape of magnificent canals and bridges. Under the Sung dynasty admirable broad highways were constructed, paved with stone and shaded by avenues of fine trees; but these have been permitted through the gross negligence of local authorities to fall out of repair, while in many places, through the uprooting of both trees and flagstones—misappropriated for fuel or building purposes—they have been entirely destroyed. The canals and bridges, however, still remain. The former supplement the river systems in China, and almost the entire carrying trade of the empire is effected by means of the junks which swarm along these waterways. Of the iron suspension bridges, by means of which many rivers are crossed in Western China, travellers have often enough spoken in eulogistic terms.

In shipbuilding the Chinese have been proficient for centuries. Marco Polo speaks of large four-masted vessels, containing fifty or sixty cabins, which were used for trading to and from the islands in the Pacific. Their hulls were built, he says, in water-tight compartments, and some of the biggest junks were manned by two or three hundred sailors. The Chinese were the first to build ships in compartments, and it was in imitation of them that a similar method was em-

A TRADING SHIP.

ployed in more recent times by European constructors. The highest praise has been given to the Chinese for the skill with which they manage their vessels; their river navigation is superior to that of any other nation, the junks being handled with consummate ingenuity. It was the Chinese, also, who first invented the compass, which was used by them more than fifteen hundred years ago.

Without the aid of Western science, wonderful results have been achieved in the industries of China by the invention of clever, though simple, contrivances. Huc relates how salt manufacturers in Szechuan utilize volcanoes for furnaces with perfect safety, which may certainly be regarded as a high test of dexterity. For their mining operations the Chinese use a torch made of sawdust and resin, which burns brightly without flame and does not ignite the inflammable gases in the shaft. Metals are worked, and great bells cast, with a precision and finish that may compare favourably with similar productions of European workmanship. The manufacture of porcelain is carried on, chiefly in the province of Kiangsi, under the most perfect system of divided labour. So advanced, in fact, are the Chinese in respect to art productions, that an extensive business is done, as elsewhere nearer home, in skilful imitations of ancient ware, which is as much prized by Chinese amateurs as it is by European collectors. The antiquity of porcelain manufacture is great, the finest specimens of China vases dating from the Han dynasty, at the beginning of our era. In nothing, however, is the remarkable ingenuity with which great ends are accomplished by the simplest means better exemplified than in the cultivation of the soil. The subject is too large to be explained in a few phrases, and must be reserved for fuller treatment; but the fact that in China mountains are cut into terraces and irrigated up to their summits, and that the very rocks are consequently compelled to grow their share of produce, is in itself an indication of the high plane of civilization which must have been reached to create such marvels of human skill and industry.

Of all methods of locomotion in the Chinese Empire the most agreeable, by universal consent, is junk-travelling on the waterways. The wealthier classes go about to a great extent, and for their convenience comfortable and well-fitted boats are on hire at all the chief inland ports. Besides these there are, of course, public junks, which do not offer many more comforts than are to be obtained on board a Thames steamboat, and

A WATER WHEEL

which possess the same disadvantages of being overcrowded and dirty. The usual mode of travelling in the southern provinces is by water; but in the north, and in those districts which do not possess good river or canal communications, there are other and more painful means of transport. In the first place, there is the palanquin, which corresponds more or less to the sedan chair of our forefathers. The bearers of these aristocratic

conveyances accomplish the most surprising feats in the way of climbing mountains or crawling along the edges of a precipice; but it is a fatiguing thing to be shut up for a long journey in a box, where one is not much better off than the poor tailor who travelled a few years ago inside his own luggage from Vienna to Paris. Should, however, the palanquin be rejected, there is only a choice of evils. The wheelbarrow, a favourite vehicle in the north, seems scarcely compatible with the dignity of the travelling European, in spite of the superiority conferred upon it by the hoisting of a sail in a favourable wind; and there only remains, unless a horse or an ass be ridden by preference, the alternative of driving in a springless cart. The jolting of the latter on the shockingly neglected roads is so fearful that upsets are the rule rather than the exception; and it is to the frequency of these accidents that Huc attributes the skill of the native doctors in setting fractured limbs.

Although the Chinese have introduced telegraphs to a considerable extent throughout a great portion of the empire, they still cling affectionately to their postal system, which remains much the same as it was hundreds of years ago. The government employs runners on foot or couriers on horseback, who are stationed at intervals on the roads leading to the various provinces. Each man takes the missive, or whatever it may be, to the next station, where another messenger is waiting to take it on the next stage, and so on. By this means enormous distances are covered in an incredibly short space of time. Marco Polo relates that dispatches are received in this way within twenty-four hours from places which it would take an ordinary traveller ten days to reach. If the Chinese wished to have a properly organized postal service, they could easily establish one. Sir Robert Hart has already made a beginning in that direction by the opening of an imperial post-office in 1897. But it must be borne in mind that letter-writing is not carried on in China to anything approaching the extent to which it is unhappily indulged in here; and it seems a pity to

impose upon a third of humanity, which has got on very comfortably without it, an institution that most people regard as the greatest of modern curses. Reforms are perhaps necessary; but they might with advantage be more humanely selected.

Society in China is founded on an ideal plan. There are no class distinctions as we understand them; and the only aristocracy which exists outside of the imperial family is that of talent. Here and there, at rare intervals, hereditary titles have been conferred upon individuals distinguished beyond their fellow-men: such as the dukedom bestowed upon the descendants of Confucius, by the gift of which, according to Chinese custom, the great ancestor was also ennobled. But, except in such rare cases as the one cited, the highest degrees of rank cannot be inherited beyond the fourth generation. The mandarinate ranks of course higher than the agricultural, commercial, and industrial classes; but the theoretical equality remains fundamentally true, because it is open to the humblest individual in the empire—with the exception of those who follow certain occupations which are considered ignoble—to enter the public service. There is no need for him to procure a nomination from a minister before he may take part in the necessary examinations. All he has to do, in order to join the ranks of the literati or to become eligible for the magistracy, is to show a clean escutcheon and pass certain standards; and there is no office, however high, to which he may not aspire. The whole scheme savours of socialism; but without its drawbacks, and in an elevated form. For in a commune there would be a levelling of talent; whereas in the Chinese system the greatest ability theoretically reaps the greatest reward.

Unhappily, all Chinese institutions have to be taken with a grain of salt. However admirable they may sound in theory, the practice is often the opposite of what is intended. Corruption is too extensive a topic to be discussed at length in this place, but it is an element which enters largely into the

otherwise admirable principles on which the institutions of China are founded. Its causes will be dealt with later on; at the moment it is sufficient to say that bribery in many instances takes the place of merit under the present régime. Degrees can be purchased, and official promotion falls more often to the lot of rich men who can afford to make the necessary presents to their superiors, than to poorer, though perhaps more worthy, aspirants.

Respect for letters is so deeply inculcated in the Chinese character, that it has never been found necessary to make education compulsory. Neither are any restrictions placed on the establishment of schools. Anybody who likes may open a school, without the slightest interference on the part of the authorities; and it is usual for the village elders or the principal inhabitants in a municipal district to meet and organize a system of local instruction according to the needs of the population. It is at some such combination that our own educational authorities have been vainly aiming for the last few years. But China has in this respect achieved what we have been unable to accomplish, because a strong public opinion exists there in favour of education. The same stimulus does not exist in this country, as the most that a thorough schooling can do for our masses is to make better mechanics of them, which can hardly be called an inducement; whereas the son of the commonest labourer in China may aspire to become a magistrate, a prefect, or even a viceroy—at least in theory, if not in practice.

The great stumbling-block of Chinese education is the ideographic system of writing, which requires years of patient study before it can be learnt. It is the key to the national literature, and without it little of course can be accomplished. But it must not be supposed that the time spent in acquiring a knowledge of these multiform characters is necessarily wasted. The A B C of European languages cannot be said to stimulate the imagination in any sense; but Chinese letters represent ideas

and not sounds, and it may certainly be claimed for the system that it does a vast amount towards drawing out the intelligence of the child.

Education may be said to be completed by the study of the nine classical books, which form the basis of the literary examinations. Of these one of the most interesting is the Shi King, or Book of Odes, collected by Confucius. It consists of a selection of popular songs current in various districts at different periods during the centuries preceding the philosopher's birth; and contains, as may be supposed, an excellent reflection of the state of society at that remote period. On these classics the whole foundation of Chinese literature rests. It has been, until lately, the chief aim of scholars and writers to increase the sum of annotations and learned commentaries on the nine books, in preference to producing original works. Tracing the various branches of letters which were specially encouraged at certain periods of history, Professor Douglas observes :*—

> Historical and philosophical research marked the Han period; under the T'ang Dynasty there arose generations of elegant prose and brilliant verse writers, at the bidding of whose pencils the angularity of the language yielded to their well-turned periods, and the short, formal lines of the earlier poetry were exchanged for more musical and plastic verses. Under the Sung Dynasty philosophy again held sway, while dramatic writings distinguished the succeeding Mongol Dynasty, and during the Ming Dynasty arose that desire to compile encyclopædias which has been so marked during the last four centuries. Of late years, however, there has been displayed a keenness of research and power of independent criticism which will give the present period a prominent place in Chinese literature.

Such works as the "Encyclopædia Britannica" pale before the monumental labours of Chinese compilers, to which allusion was made in the foregoing chapter. The record was beaten under one of the first Ming emperors, who ordered an encyclopædia to be prepared which consisted, when it was finished,

* "China," p. 376.

of 22,937 books! Happily for posterity the MS. was never printed, but remains in the imperial library at Peking for exclusive consultation by the Son of Heaven.

It will have been seen that the enjoyment of Chinese literature is a matter of leisure as well as of culture. But for the benefit of people who wish to become acquainted with the history of their country, and who are not able to give the necessary time to its study, there exists in China a class of men termed Public Readers, who much resemble, in the methods by which they carry on their profession, our stump orators and open-air lecturers. They select a street-corner, or some other public place, and read aloud some portion of the classics, accompanying it by commentaries of their own in explanation of the text; just as Sunday-school teachers conduct Bible classes. At intervals a pause is made for collections, to the which the audience readily subscribe. In this way many poor people who would otherwise have little chance of acquiring knowledge, are able to pick up a respectable amount of information, imparted in an interesting and popular manner.

There being no such thing in China as party politics, little impetus has been given towards the establishment of a native press. The constitution of an organized body, charged with the duty of publicly criticising the government, has removed to a great extent the *raison d'être* of the newspaper. People do not trouble their heads about what goes on outside the empire, and the machinery of their own administration only concerns them inasmuch as it may interfere with their private affairs. It is a mistake to suppose that the Chinese easily allow themselves to be oppressed. They are long-suffering and patient to a certain point, and possess a great sense of submission to authority. But magistrates cannot make themselves obnoxious to the population in general without drawing upon themselves their active resentment, frequently expressed by acts of violence. Unpopular officials are, in

fact, often driven out of their mandarinate by main force. Local criticism finds ample vent in the posting of lampoons and placards, which either hold up offending mandarins to ridicule, or deal out public praise to those who have incurred popular favour by some act of justice or benevolence.

The supposed paganism of the Chinese and their treatment of women have always been put forward as the chief blots on their civilization. European missionaries who have spent futile years in an attempt to convert the people to Christianity have been shocked at their insensibility to the new doctrine. No doubt, if Chinese missionaries were to come over here with the object of reclaiming us, they would be equally disgusted at our failure to appreciate the wisdom of Confucius, or to revere the memory of great-grandfathers and great-uncles of whom we have scarcely heard. It is hardly fair, therefore, to apply a religious test of this kind to people who are saturated with the customs and beliefs in which they and their ancestors have been reared for generations. When the emperor Taokwang of the present dynasty was informed that the Christian doctrine was to propagate good and repress evil, he immediately issued an edict for the protection of missionaries; and the persecutions which followed later were wholly due to political—and not to religious, causes. In this country people do not take the same trouble to ascertain the moral value of Chinese teaching; and yet many of the most beautiful precepts of the Christian religion were taught by Confucius five hundred years before our era, at a time when the inhabitants of these islands were naked savages. That the teachings of their sages have had a deep and permanent effect upon the Chinese people is irrefutable. An excellent example of the veneration accorded to the precepts of Confucius is given by Mr Raphael Pumpelly, who was formerly in the service of the Chinese government as mining expert. When paying a visit of inspection to some coal mines in the Metropolitan province, Mr Pumpelly

passed with his companions through the town of Ta-hwei-chang.*

"The whole population of men and boys followed us through the streets," he writes. "From laughing at each other's jokes made at our expense, they proceeded to open ridicule of us, and, regardless of our official escort, began to hoot, and finally to throw missiles. When they had reached this point, Murray stopped his horse, and, turning to face the crowd, raised his hand to motion silence.

"'O, people of Ta-hwei-chang!' exclaimed Murray, in excellent Chinese, 'is this your hospitality? Do ye thus observe the injunctions of your sages, that ye shall treat kindly the stranger that is within your gates? Have ye forgotten that your great teacher, Confucius, hath said: "What I would not that men should do to me, that would I not also do to men?"'

"The effect of this exhortation was as remarkable as it was unexpected by me. In an instant the character of the crowd was changed; the hooting and pelting had stopped to hear the barbarian talking in the familiar words of Confucius, the old men bowed approvingly, and a number of boys jumped forward to show us the way. This scene," Mr Pumpelly continues, "will appear more impressive by contrast, if we suppose a couple of Chinamen, followed by a crowd of a few thousand American men and boys, and if we suppose the two strangers to turn and quote in good English the similar passage of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. The reader may form his own opinion as to the success of such an experiment."

There is just the same careless generalization in regard to the treatment of women in China. The position accorded to woman in Chinese society is strictly a domestic one, and, as is the case in other Eastern countries, she is denied the liberty which threatens to attain such amazing proportions in the West. There is no reason to suppose that woman in China is treated worse than elsewhere; but people can of course paint her condition just as fancy seizes them. They are rarely admitted into the domestic surroundings of Chinese homes, therefore there is nothing to curb the imagination. The truth is that just as much may be said on one side as on the other. Domestic happiness is in China—as everywhere else the world over—a lottery. The parents invariably select partners in

* "Across America and Asia," p. 299.

marriage for their sons and daughters, and sometimes make as great blunders as the young people would if left to choose for themselves. Much, of course, has been said about the practice of concubinage, which is legalized in China. It arose from the necessity of having a son to perform the ancestral rites after the death of his father; and, as childless wives are generally the first to desire their husbands to take a concubine for that purpose, little objection need be taken to the custom except on account of morality. If Western nations care to cast a stone at the Chinese on that score, let them do so.

To give an example of the inaccuracy of the general statements in which travellers often indulge, let us suppose a Chinese traveller, who is passing some time in London in order to study the Men of the Western Seas, to amuse himself, or to seek information, by a diligent perusal of the police news and divorce court reports. Undoubtedly, on his return to China, he would faithfully report that the English Barbarians are fond of kicking their wives to death; and that husbands and wives are never faithful to each other, but are obliged to be publicly separated by the tribunals. His logic would also be comparatively sounder than that of many European travellers who generalize from half-a-dozen instances on the customs of three or four hundred million people. From the wonderful tranquillity of the Chinese Empire and the peaceable demeanour of the population, it may be inferred with far more plausibility that, if there be any advantage on one side or the other as to the felicity of the domestic relations, it rests with the Yellow race.

CHAPTER VI

BLISSFUL SCIENTIFIC IGNORANCE

European Conception of Civilized Life—View taken by the Chinese—Scanty Knowledge of Astronomy—Medical Practitioners—Absence of Qualification—Punishment for Irregular Treatment—Strange Remedies—Chinese Surgery—A Political Economist—Sound Theories about Foreign Trade—Geographical Knowledge—Absence of Scientific Classification—The Literati and Western Science.

SETTING aside the maladministration of what is generally acknowledged to be an excellent theory of government, and the political difficulties created by the foreign question which have been accumulating of late years, it is wonderful how well the Chinese have got on without the aid of Western science. To the modern European mind, civilization is synonymous with a vast system of mechanical convenience. A network of railways conveys the Western traveller in any direction he pleases, at a speed which, less than a century ago, would have been ridiculed as beyond the bounds of human possibility; and along which cars containing every comfort that could be provided by a hotel are whirled at a rate of fifty or sixty miles an hour. Telephonic conversations can be carried on between people living in different countries; and an hour or so suffices to transmit a message by electricity to almost any part of the world. The daily newspaper is placed upon the breakfast-table every morning, by means of which the humblest artisan can inform himself of what is passing in every quarter of the globe. The best that is produced by every nation on earth can

be procured at any of our principal shops or stores for a moderate price, which, in these days of rapid and economical transport, still leaves ample margin for the retailer's profit. There are few luxuries which people of moderate means cannot enjoy in their own houses; and for the convenience of those whose tenements are too humble to contain every modern comfort, public baths, free libraries, and other establishments are erected by the local authorities according to the needs of each district.

The Chinese take quite a different view of life. With them tranquillity and contentment are the chief objects of national pursuit, and they have no appreciation for the perpetual hurry and bustle which characterize life in the West. Being more or less independent of foreign countries for the supply of necessaries, there is not the same need of the rapid carriage of goods that is felt by nations which are compelled to fetch their food supplies from long distances. This must not, of course, be supposed to imply that everybody in China has plenty to eat. It is well enough known that terrible famines, brought about chiefly by inundations, have caused immense havoc in the afflicted neighbourhood; and that in some cases over-population has resulted in the lowering of wages and consequent stress of poverty, while in others the depopulation caused by rebellions or other calamities has left whole tracts of land, which were formerly under cultivation, barren and desolate. But at the same time, the rapidity with which these great national wounds are healed by industry and emigration has frequently evoked expressions of admiration from those who have witnessed the process. They are mishaps which are due to natural causes, and which are not the outcome of an inefficient system of agriculture or want of industry on the part of the people. The great curse of China for all time has been the gigantic inundations caused by the overflowing of her immense rivers; and the Hoang Ho, which once caused a flood that has been mistaken for Noah's, and which has nine times

shifted its course during the last thirteen hundred years, has always been a perplexing problem to China's greatest men. If British engineers could accomplish for the Hoang Ho what they have done for the Nile, they would earn for themselves the lasting gratitude of the Chinese; but the latter are not able to see in our relations with their country anything more than

A FISHING NET

a desire to fill our own pockets at their expense, a point of view at which one can hardly be surprised. It is the melancholy result of commencing relations with a country by thrusting upon it a commerce which it did not desire and officially repudiated.

Few people will be disposed to deny that the bulk of the Chinese people are contented with their lot, and it is noteworthy that this problem of the happiness of the greatest number has been solved without the aid of those progressive expedients

which form the structure of Western civilization. There are physicians, astronomers, mathematicians, political economists, philosophers, and naturalists in China; but the sciences represented by these learned men are, according to our standards, in a state of comparative backwardness and crudity. And yet, in spite of this indubitable fact, there is no nation more populous, more moral, or with a better balanced distribution of wealth than the Chinese. Their practical knowledge of astronomy is even scantier than that which is popularly attributed to them. Kanghi, an emperor of the present dynasty and one of the most enlightened monarchs who have ruled over China, had an inkling as to the real state of scientific knowledge in his country. He instituted a competition between the Jesuit missionaries and native astronomers, in which each was to calculate the length of the shadow cast by a gnomon at a given time. The Jesuits alone gave the correct forecast. One must, however, give Chinese astronomers the credit that is due to them. For more than two thousand years they have known the length of the solar year to be 365 days and nearly six hours; whereas exact calculations were not made in the West until the ninth century of our era. For the same length of time they have been able to take meridian altitudes of the sun, and have calculated the movements of the planets. In fact, from the time of Noah's flood, celestial observations have been made by the Chinese. When Father Ricci visited the empire in the fifteenth century, he found at the Nanking observatory instruments made of brass which surpassed any that he had seen in Europe. One of them was an immense sphere, engraved with parallel circles and meridians and divided into degrees. Arithmetic in the Middle Kingdom is necessarily limited on account of the absence of anything like our figures in the language. Calculations are made with an instrument which consists of a number of ivory balls strung on parallel rods; but the merchants and clerks become so adept at using it that they can cast up the most complicated accounts in less time than a European.

It is quite evident that people can scrape along very comfortably without holding correct theories about the precession of the equinoxes and in entire ignorance of spectrum analysis. But one would expect to find in a cultivated society a better development of medical knowledge than the quackery which is its substitute in China. The art of healing is founded solely upon practical observation. Certain drugs, or certain modes of treatment, are observed to have a beneficial effect under given circumstances; though it does not after all signify much to the patient what erroneous theories the physician may hold as to the action of his remedies, provided they result in a cure. This is, of course, very unscientific reasoning; but, as Huc very tritely observes, "There are few people who would not prefer being saved in the most irregular and stupid manner, to being killed according to the most approved and scientific methods." To the present generation of Chinese there must be consolation in the fact that the sufferings they undergo at the hands of their doctors are lessened by experiments extending over a period of four thousand years; and it may readily be supposed that the collected wisdom of so many centuries, empirical though it be, is not without practical utility.

The Chinese government has so much belief in the commonsense and judgment of the people, that it has laid down no restrictions as to the practice of medicine, on the principle that man never jests with his health and is more likely to exercise care in selecting a physician than in any other matter. How far this confidence is justified it would be impossible to conjecture; but it is probable that the Chinese are as ready to take people at their own valuation as we are ourselves, and do not suffer less in consequence. Professor Douglas divides Chinese doctors into three classes: those who have inherited prescriptions of merit; literary failures, who have taken to the study of medicine; and the merest quacks. It would probably be hard to distinguish between them, until the drugs had already been swallowed and the mischief done. The absence of

any qualification for the practice of the healing art has had the natural effect of creating an enormous number of medical practitioners; and, as there is no particular honour attached to the profession, which on the contrary is rather looked down upon than otherwise, it has become a kind of last resort for those who have failed to obtain more respectable employment. The remuneration is on a correspondingly low scale, and is suited, as is generally the case in this country, to the means of the patient. Chinese doctors are usually apothecaries as well, and sell to their patients the remedies they prescribe. An obvious objection to this system is that they are exposed to the temptation of putting as many drugs as possible into the prescription in order to increase their profit. It is no uncommon thing, however, for the patient to strike indiscriminately the more expensive items out of the recipe; much in the way that a mandarin, commissioned a little while ago to purchase cannon for the Chinese government, insisted upon the makers omitting for economy's sake the breech-piece, which is the most essential part of the mechanism. There is, however, a still greater safeguard in the fact that these medicaments are generally supplied on credit; and if they have not effected satisfactory results, the patient refuses payment. The advantages of this system are plain enough, and it would be by no means a bad thing if a somewhat similar inducement were held out to doctors in this country. It would save the swallowing of tons of bread pills and gallons of coloured water, and it would cause the speedy disappearance of fancied invalids. Though, on the other hand, many physicians might be ruined thereby; and the reduction of the death-rate would bring about perplexing over-population problems which at present are kept happily in abeyance.

The patient is not entirely left to the tender mercies of the unskilful practitioner. A section in the penal code of China provides for the compulsory ejection from the medical profession of doctors or surgeons who have caused the death of a patient by unorthodox or neglectful treatment. In cases of this

kind a jury is formed of medical men, whose duty it is to investigate the whole matter and deliver their verdict or opinion to the magistrate who has appointed the inquiry. If the physician is proved to have acted contrary to established practice, or to have been wilfully negligent, he is adjudged guilty of homicide and punished accordingly. But if his compeers find that he has only followed an erroneous course of treatment—which comes well within the definition "established practice"—he is let off with a fine. In either case, however, a salutory and permanent check is placed upon his medical career.

The Chinese pharmacopœia contains some remarkable medicines. Staghorn is considered one of the most potent remedies in the entire pharmacy, and it is supposed to be an absolute cure for consumption when prepared in the form of glue. Sores are sometimes treated by an outward application of the dirt thrown up by earthworms, formed into a cake resembling a corn-plaster on which a burning piece of wood is pressed. There are also pitch-plasters for rheumatism; and herb poultices are commonly used to reduce swellings. Mr Hosie* relates how one of his coolies was treated by his companions for a cut in the forehead caused by a fall.

> Now, thought I, had the time arrived to display my store of foreign medicines, and I was looking forward to the effect which an application of Friar's Balsam would have on the patient and his comrades, when there was a sudden call for tobacco. My pleadings to be allowed to treat the case were in vain—a handful of cut tobacco was placed over the wound, and all the assistance I was permitted to give was the loan of my handkerchief to bind the head and keep the narcotic in position.

When the Abbé Huc was travelling in the interior of China he was taken so seriously ill that his life was despaired of and a handsome coffin prepared in readiness for the funeral by delicate-minded and friendly mandarins. The Chinese physician called in to his aid made him swallow a quantity of minute red globules, assuring him that they would prove a decisive

* "Three Years in Western China," p. 92.

remedy. The Abbé, with Christian resignation, took the pills as directed, and from that moment the recovery of his health proceeded with the greatest rapidity; and he declares himself, although somewhat sceptical as to the healing methods generally employed by the Chinese, that he was very probably indebted to Chinese medicine, after God, for the preservation of his life on that occasion.

In spite of pounded tigers' teeth, dried lizard skins, dog's flesh, oyster-shells, verdigris, bear's gall, and other pleasant ingredients of their pharmacopœia, Chinese doctors manage to effect very creditable cures as long as they stick to drugs and common-sense. It is in their surgery that they fail most miserably. Having a rooted prejudice against the mutilation of the body, the Chinese have never studied anatomy by dissecting corpses, and consequently their ideas on the subject are of the haziest description. Not only do they know next to nothing of the circulation of the blood or of the functions of various internal organs, but they are unable to locate important parts of the body with exactitude. This fact does not, however, prevent them from sticking long needles into a patient's body in order to cure rheumatism or alleviate a stomach-ache. The comparative harmlessness of this operation, performed with an entire ignorance of what the instrument is piercing, can only be ascribed to the extraordinary immunity from all inflammatory diseases enjoyed by the Chinese; and as the puncture is usually made with a hot needle, it is difficult to see where the supposed relief to the sufferer comes in. Surgery in China may be said to be limited to this practice of acupuncture. In the matter of bone-setting, as has been observed in a former chapter, very considerable skill is shown and the most wonderful cures are effected. It is interesting to note, also, that the custom of drinking hot water, so widely prevalent throughout Europe of late years, was originated by a Chinese doctor in San Francisco, who prescribed it to his patients as a remedy for dyspepsia.

The views of the Chinese on topics of abstract philosophy are far sounder than their medical theories or physical science. The political economy of the empire, as propounded by the economist Kouan-tse before the Christian era, differs in no way from the fundamental teaching of our own great exponents Adam Smith and J. S. Mill. Huc* gives the following excerpt from the Chinese text:—

> The money which enters a kingdom by commerce only enriches it in the same proportion as that which goes out. There is no commerce permanently advantageous but the exchange of things useful and necessary. The trade in articles of pomp, elegance, or curiosity, whether carried on by exchange or by money payments, supposes the existence of luxury; now luxury, which is the abundance of what is superfluous among certain citizens, supposes the want of necessaries among others. The more horses the rich put to their chariots, the more people will have to walk on foot; the more their houses are vast and magnificent, the more those of the poor are small and miserable; the more their tables are covered with dainties, the more people there are reduced to eat only rice. The best that can be done for men in a social state by means of industry and labour is that all should have the necessaries, and some the conveniences of life.

The cardinal principles of Western political economy were summed up in these few words by Kouan-tse countless generations before its existence as a science in Europe. According to his theory China can derive no advantage from sending out of the country such products as silk or tea, and importing in their stead the articles of luxury shipped to them by foreign merchants. Our economists have always drawn a line between productive and unproductive labour, proving that it is by the former alone that the community at large can be enriched. In that sense Kouan-tse is perfectly correct in saying that the more the rich buy luxuries, the more the poor will be deprived of necessaries; because, although an individual may grow rich, and at the same time increase the wealth of others by some industrial enterprise, if he elects to produce luxuries he diverts labour, which would otherwise have been applied

* "The Chinese Empire," vol. ii. p. 130.

to the production of necessaries, into less useful channels, and thereby impoverishes the community in general. All of which may be found in the pages of Adam Smith, Mill, and a host of modern authorities.

The study of geography has received its chief impetus during the present century, when the appearance of the English in 1840 as an aggressive element in Chinese politics initiated the necessity of a closer intimacy with the geographical and constitutional aspect of the Western kingdoms. Modern Chinese geographies have undoubtedly been compiled with the assistance of Europeans; but it must not be supposed that the Chinese have had no text-books or maps of their own. They have possessed for a long time comparatively accurate accounts of the great continents of the old world, and much of our knowledge concerning the geography of Asia in the middle ages has been derived from Chinese sources.

One cannot say that the Chinese have no acquaintance with natural history, chemistry, or geological science; their encyclopædias abound with learned treatises and compilations on subjects such as, birds, beasts, insects, trees, fruits, herbs, fire, water, earth, minerals, and so on *ad infinitum*. But in the absence of any system of scientific classification it cannot be suggested that much progress has been made towards establishing the distinct branches of knowledge recognized in the West. The grouping of plants into those which are poisonous and those which are harmless is an indication of the crude methods employed by Chinese naturalists.

Intelligent and enlightened Chinese scholars of to-day are by no means ignorant of modern science. Thanks to the missionaries of various periods, text-books on all important branches of European knowledge have been translated into the Chinese language. But the pride of the literati does not permit them to acknowledge that they are indebted to the men of the Western Seas for any kind of intellectual progress.

They have, therefore, bethought themselves of an astute way out of the difficulty. It is now asserted by them that modern sciences and inventions owe their origin to Chinese sources, and that the real credit of Western progress must therefore be given to China who first paved the way for it. Much is made by the literati of the fact that the rotundity of the earth wa spoken of in their classic books. The same statement was made by Aristotle more than three hundred years B.C.; it is scarcely probable, therefore, that the knowledge of the earth's shape was derived from Chinese astronomers.

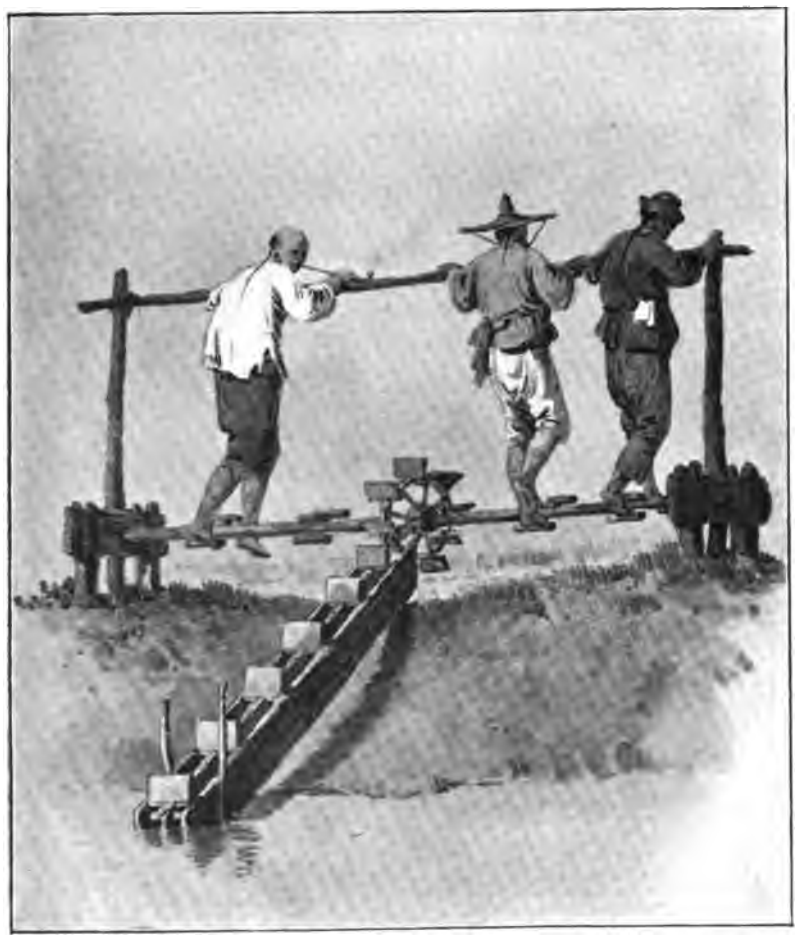
CHAPTER VII

GENIUS IN FARMING

The Feast of Agriculture—A Favourable Climate—Ingenious Methods of Irrigation—Rice Cultivation—Rice Wine—The History of Tea—Method of Gathering—Curing the Leaves—Teas shipped to England—"Brick Tea" Porters—Silk-Worm Industry—Cotton—The Varnish-Tree—Fantastic Gardening —Superiority of Chinese Farming.

THE oldest traditions of the Chinese Empire show the great honour which has always been paid to those whose labour is devoted to the soil. More than four thousand years ago a ploughman ascended the Dragon throne, having been nominated by the emperor Yao as his worthiest successor; and even to-day the peasant class provides the administration with many of its most distinguished representatives. The annual Feast of Agriculture, which is celebrated throughout the empire in the early spring, was instituted before the Christian era. It is supposed to have been originally held in commemoration of one of the first Han emperors, who carried his esteem for husbandry so far as to lay out the grounds of his palace with his own hands. The festival is marked by a kind of Lord Mayor's procession, headed by the principal mandarin of the district, in which an enormous cow, made of baked clay, and other images are carried in triumph. The proceedings are terminated by a speech in praise of agriculture, and a brief exhibition in ploughing is executed by the highest dignitary present.

The same sort of ceremony is observed by the emperor at Peking. In the presence of the court and with the assistance



IRRIGATION BY MEANS OF CHAIN PUMP

of a chosen band of labourers, he solemnly turns up, amid a profound and respectful silence, several furrows in various places. The ground having been prepared, the emperor then proceeds to sow five kinds of grain in the different parts of the field. This piece of land is placed in charge of the governor of the capital, who visits it regularly in order to see that proper care is taken of the growing crops. In the autumn he superintends the gathering of the harvest, which is put into sacks of imperial yellow; and the grain is used afterwards by the emperor when sacrificing to the Supreme Lord of Wisdom, or during his observance of the ancestral rites.

China is favoured with a remarkably good climate. The western half of the empire is shut in from the cold north winds by high mountain ranges, and in the east and south a mild and humid atmosphere is caused by the evaporations of the ocean. The Yang-tse valley, owing to its situation, enjoys a degree of warmth and shelter which is particularly favourable to the products of agriculture. The greater part of China south of the Hoang Ho and Tsin-ling range, and comprising the entire basin of the Yang-tse, is given up to rice cultivation; while the loess region in the north produces oats, potatoes, maize, and crops of a like nature, which do not require irrigation. A large quantity of millet is also grown in the northern provinces, the seeds of which, given to birds in this country, form the staple dish for most of the poorer inhabitants.

The extraordinary skill of the farmers has already been alluded to. In nothing, perhaps, is it more strikingly shown than in the ingenious methods of irrigation which are employed in the cultivation of rice. When it is necessary to raise water from a river or canal to the level of the field, a simple contrivance is used which consists of a number of troughs or buckets set in motion by an endless chain, the latter being usually worked—somewhat after the fashion of the treadmill—by the feet. Where there is a stream to supply motive power, immense water-wheels, often thirty or forty feet in diameter,

and lightly constructed of bamboo, perform the function of irrigation automatically. Seventy thousand gallons of water are thrown up by these wheels in the course of twenty-four hours. A more primitive operation consists in lowering a bucket and drawing it up again by a simple system of leverage.

With few exceptions the land is parcelled out into small holdings, the industry and skill of the farmers being so great that the very poorest among them contrive to make a living out of a plot of ground containing only a few square yards. In the smaller allotments the earth is turned up with the hoe, in preference to using a spade. The larger farms use ploughs, generally made of wood, and merely tipped with iron, drawn in the rice fields of the southern provinces by water buffaloes; while in the north, oxen, horses, mules, and asses are employed for that purpose. In the case of rice cultivation the land is first prepared with manure, which is liberally spread over the surface, and then, after the fields have been profusely watered, mixed thoroughly up with the soil into an unsavoury kind of slush. In China nothing is allowed to waste. The Chinese act upon the principle that whatever has been taken from the soil should be returned to it; and to this solicitude must be ascribed in a great measure the extraordinary fertility of the land, and the rich and numerous harvests which are obtained by the farmers. After this operation has been performed the grain is sown. A few days later the young leaves of the rice plant will be visible above the water. As soon as it has grown to the height of seven or eight inches, it is pulled up by the roots and carefully transplanted. The chief risk encountered by rice growers is the possibility of drought when the plant is young, or of an inundation when the plant is matured and is no longer in need of water. A great visitation is also apt to come upon them in the shape of locusts, which prefer rice to any other grain.

They run the gauntlet of these dangers for the space of about three months, at the end of which time the harvest is gathered in, the rice being cut with a sickle which possesses teeth like those of a saw. The grain is then threshed out with a flail, or by beating the ears against a basket. Various methods are employed for crushing the rice. The Chinese are very clever at making simple contrivances on the principle of leverage; and

METHOD OF BRUISING RICE

one of the most usual modes of separating the grain from the husk is by means of a large pestle and mortar worked by a long treadle with the feet. Another method, used in larger establishments, consists in crushing the grain by a mill-stone turned by two mules, which walk round and round blindfolded in case they should become incapacitated by giddiness.

By fermenting the rice the Chinese manufacture a wine which is commonly drunk in most parts of the empire. In taste it is said to slightly resemble beer; but, like all other drinks in China, it is heated before being served. After the wine has been allowed to ferment for five or six days it is strained off through cloth bags into capacious jars, which are kept in a cool place to prevent the wine becoming sour. Vines have long been known to the Chinese; but the humid climate is not favourable to their cultivation, and the fruit is now only used, as in this country, either fresh or in a dried condition for the purpose of eating. Formerly, however, under the Han dynasty, the grape was fermented; and connoisseurs were accustomed to bury the jars of wine in the earth for long periods, just as the old Romans used to preserve their Falernian, and the Greeks their celebrated vintages of Lesbos and Chios.

The great national beverage in China is, of course, tea; and, although it cannot boast an antiquity anything like that of rice wine, it has nevertheless been in use for a respectable number of centuries. Mention is made of tea in ancient books as early as 350 A.D.; and under the Tang dynasty, four hundred years later, it became the common drink of all classes. The tea plant is a shrub which grows to a height of from three to six feet, and flourishes best in a sandy soil. It is cultivated throughout the eighteen provinces, but forms a special branch of agriculture in Fukien and Kwangtung, from which, in former days, there was an enormous export trade to this country. The finest kinds of black tea come from the Bohea hills in the northern part of Fukien, and were famous throughout the empire as far back as the Sung dynasty in the tenth century of our era. A local tradition relates how a venerable old man once appeared to the peasantry, holding a sprig of the tea plant in his hand. He proposed that they should make a decoction of it, and drink it; and following his recommendation, they discovered the value and utility of the leaf.

The plant is generally allowed to grow for three years before

any leaves are picked from it; though, under exceptionally favourable circumstances, they are picked after two years' growth. Three proper gatherings take place during the year; after which a sort of gleaning takes place which yields a very inferior tea. The first is made early in April, when the foliage is just beginning to open. It very much resembles the *Auslese* of the Rhine vineyards: the quantity being small, but yielding the finest and most expensive teas. Two months later a second picking takes place; and on this occasion the greatest abundance of leaves is obtained. The shrubs are then left alone for another four weeks, when the third gathering yields the produce for the common kinds of tea. The weather plays as critical a part in the quality of the tea-leaf as it does in the case of the grape. Too much rain is apt to produce mildew; and an absence of moisture stunts the growth of the plant, and reduces its foliage. What is required is a moderate amount of rain, and warm sunshine between the showers.

The gathering is performed by men, women, and children, who are employed on large plantations in much the same manner as the *vendangeurs* and hop-pickers in Europe. After the leaves have been assorted, and the moisture pressed out of them by treading with the naked feet, they are carried to the curing-houses for sale. Here they are manipulated by skilful operators, who spread them out on bamboo trays, and gently roll them. The leaves are then fired, an operation which requires great dexterity. A handful of them is sprinkled on a red-hot pan, from which they have to be removed the second a crackle has been given out by each leaf. The next process consists in placing them over a fire in baskets, when they are stirred by hand until they are perfectly dry. Some of the finest kinds of tea are scented to suit the taste of Chinese connoisseurs. In order to accomplish this, two baskets of leaves are taken and a layer of fresh flowers placed between them. The baskets are then covered over and subjected to the usual drying process. The best teas are not dried as thoroughly

as those of inferior quality, in order to preserve their delicate flavour. They are, on that account, liable to injury in keeping.

Pekoe is generally the produce of the first picking; a certain kind of it, made in the province of Kiangsu, is so delicate that it cannot be exported. When cured, it is scented with Chloranthus; and the Chinese, who pay very high prices for this particular sort, have given it the poetical name of Chu-lan, or "pearl flower." Of the stronger black teas, Souchong is considered the finest. It was much cultivated by Buddhist priests living in the hilly districts of Kwangtung, and given away by them in charity—after the fashion of the Benedictine monks, who dispensed their excellent liqueur for curative purposes until it was discovered to be a commercial gold-mine. Most of the teas shipped to England from China are those which come under the designation Kung-fu, or Congo. They are obtained from the third picking, and get mixed with all kinds of inferior trash, as most of our grocers could inform us if they chose to reveal the secrets of the trade, though it is fair to add that as much hocus-pocus is indulged in by the Hong merchants as may be suspected of taking place nearer home. Of course the competition of India has largely decreased our imports from China, and injuriously affected the trade of the latter country. A quantity of tea, compressed into the form of bricks, is manufactured in Hankow for export to Russia and Tibet. To the latter country it has to be carried across difficult passes on the backs of Chinese porters; and Huc gives a pathetic account of the long files of these poor, over-burdened creatures whom he encountered on his journey from Lhassa to the Middle Kingdom. "They advanced in silence, with slow steps," he writes, "leaning on great iron-pointed sticks, and with their eyes fixed on the ground; and beasts of burden would certainly not endure so well the constant and excessive fatigue to which these slaves of poverty are subjected."

After tea-planting the most important agricultural industry is the breeding of silk-worms. By far the greater amount of

silk is now produced in the Yang-tse valley, although in ancient times the home of sericulture was in the northern provinces. The oldest writers attribute the invention of silk manufacture to one of the wives of the emperor Hwangti, who is supposed to have occupied the Dragon Throne about twenty-six centuries B.C. In their care of the silk-worms the peasants show the greatest skill and powers of observation. The young larvæ of the wild species are protected from birds by closely meshed nets which are spread over the trees in which they are being reared; while wasps and hornets, which are equally inimical, are lured into a trap set with honey, and then burnt. The habits, weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies of the insect have been studied by the Chinese to such a nicety, that they are able to regulate its digestion by exact dieting. When the cocoon has been spun, the chrysalis is killed by the steam from boiling water; an operation which is necessary to avoid the danger of its breaking the cocoon when hatched. After having been boiled in a cauldron, the cocoons are ready for reeling, this operation being performed with the help of a simple piece of mechanism worked by a pedal.

Vast quantities of silk are manufactured in China, and it forms the material of all the clothing worn by well-to-do people throughout the empire. The cultivation of the mulberry and breeding of worms receive much encouragement from the authorities in the southern provinces; and at the present moment, in the absence of any mining enterprise, the silk industry is the greatest source of wealth which China possesses.

Much more cotton was grown before the Taiping rebellion than is the case now. The chief cotton-growing district is the Yang-tse plain, which lies east of Ichang. The plants last for three years; after which they are pulled up, and the ground sowed with alternate crops of millet or barley. In the province of Ngan-whei a cotton is grown of a reddish-yellow colour; and it is out of this material that nankeens—or cloths made at Nanking—are manufactured. The con-

sumption of cotton in China is stupendous, the vast masses of the peasantry and industrial classes being clothed with it. It is usual for the cloths to be dyed a blue colour, and for this purpose most farmers cultivate a small field of indigo, which supplies the wants of the household.

The product of the varnish-tree is still an important article of commerce in the southern provinces. The work of extracting it is by no means an agreeable occupation, as, unless stringent precautions are taken, the evaporation is apt to produce a horrible complaint which the Chinese call varnish-boils. To guard against this, the people who are employed at the work cover their heads with linen bags, which are fastened round the neck and contain two holes for the eyes; while the hands are protected by deer-skin gloves. A less dangerous method of extraction than that of hand labour consists in draining off the juice into bamboo pipes, from which it is then emptied into large earthen jars through a strainer of fine cloth. This varnish not only possesses an exquisite brilliancy, but has the property of preserving the wood on which it is placed. Its transparency is so great that two or three coatings do not prevent one from seeing every fibre of the surface underneath.

Gardening in China ranks as one of the fine arts. The results achieved by skilled horticulturists are marvellous, and can only be compared with the contrasts and effects produced by a clever landscape painter. The method of cultivation and arrangement is to produce a series of scenes exhibiting the most contrasting combinations. A blood-curdling effect will be introduced by means of rocks, dark caves, and rushing cataracts; the sense of horror being increased by the trunks of trees blasted as if by lightning, or thrown down by the fury of a pretended tempest; while the scene will be rendered still more diabolical through the introduction of a house half-consumed by fire, and of a few miserable huts intended to convey the impression of the wretchedness of their inhabitants.

From this scene of gloom a sudden transition will be made to something bright and pleasing, full of brilliant colour and romantic charm, where everything is calculated to delight the senses. The gardeners also exhibit a fantastic humour by creating mysterious and uncanny sounds, which are calculated to startle and overawe the visitor, through the medium of subterranean torrents and improvised whispering-galleries. With the same amiable intention they let loose amid the scenery various kinds of monstrous birds and animals.

The Chinese carry their love of artificial ornamentation to such an extent, that they intersperse in their lakes islands created by human labour, and covered with every artistic charm which ingenuity can suggest. Rocks are specially manufactured in Canton and elsewhere to form the caves and grottos with which Chinese gardens abound. They are covered with moss and shrubs, and a flight of irregular steps generally leads to a temple, or summer-house, with which the summit is crowned; while bridges and cascades are arranged to add a pleasing variety to the scene.

From time immemorial agriculture has formed a fruitful theme for learned disquisition, and even emperors have not disdained to pen treatises for its encouragement. A calendar for the guidance of the farmer in such matters as the rotation of crops, and other valuable processes, was published about four thousand years ago; and since that time numerous works have been issued on the same subject. In spite of this fact, however, it cannot be said that the peasants possess any knowledge of what we call scientific farming. Under the Chow dynasty, several centuries before the Christian era, they were systematically instructed in the various branches of agriculture; but since that remote period the methods employed by them have undergone no practical change. And yet it cannot be denied that Chinese farmers accomplish far more with their wooden plough and simple hoe than could even be dreamt of by our agriculturists, in spite of our steam appliances and theoretical science.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AUTOCRAT OF THE FAMILY

The Social Prejudices of Europe contrasted with those of China—Husband and Wife—The Family Autocrat—Village Communities and Domestic Jurisdiction—Children's Inheritance—The Treatment of Girls—Obedience to Parents—Instances of Filial Devotion—Stability of Family Ties—Culprits' Preference for being punished at Home—The Mystery of the Feng-Shui—Curious Method of Building—Home Comforts—A Peasant's Daily Routine.

THERE is very little resemblance between domestic life in a Chinese and European household. In many respects the one is precisely the antithesis of the other. As men and women grow older in Western countries, they find themselves being gradually pushed out of their place in the world by the rising generation. Old age does not *ipso facto* command universal respect. Wealth position, and attainments are—in the order named—the chief objects of reverence with us; though in regard to the latter, we are equally indifferent if success has been achieved by merit or advertisement. Children do not invariably render to their parents the obedience which is taught them in their catechism; while any idea of docility on the part of full-grown sons or daughters would be laughed to scorn and considered an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of the individual.

The Chinese hold opposite opinions on all these points. From the emperor down to the humblest labourer, they honour nothing so much as old age. The homage paid to a venerable elder by relations, friends, and strangers is of the profoundest nature. Advanced years are held in such esteem, that it is a

common act of courtesy in China to pretend you think a person much older than he really is. "What is your honourable age?" you would ask, when introduced to a new acquaintance. "My insignificant years do not number more than thirty," may be the modest reply. "Oh!" it is polite to exclaim, in a tone of great surprise, "I should have taken you to be forty at the very least!" And the other, even if a woman, will blush with pleasure at the insinuated flattery.

Strange as this may sound, a far greater contrast to the customs of Europe is presented by the family circle of the average Chinaman. The relations between husband and wife probably remain much the same all the world over. Woman, however she may be regarded in theory, possesses a knack of asserting herself in her own home with a recuperative power which will even bear up against the costermonger's fist. It is the fashion in Europe to consider the lot of a woman, who has not the same kind of liberty as that enjoyed by her sex in the West, as unbearable and iniquitous. Asiatics take a very different view of the case. They think it a deplorable thing that European women should be every moment subject to the intrusion of a husband, who can spy upon and control their actions; and that they are not allowed to have the best part of the house exclusively to themselves, where they can receive their female friends and gossip without restraint. The latter assertion will strike the British Benedict's sense of humour as being painfully ironical; but no doubt ample food for reflection is afforded his womenkind by the former observation.

The position of a Chinese woman in her own household is that which is, or ought to be, occupied by her sisters in every clime. She is left in absolute control of all domestic concerns, and is given far more say in the expenditure of the family income than is generally the case amongst our lower classes. It is true that she owes obedience to her husband; but it must be recollected that this is equally the case in our country. The

obligation is probably as much respected in China as it is here. Stories have been, and always will be, told about the yoking of women to ploughs and similar cruelties; but, as was remarked some pages back, it would be quite as fair to paraphrase our police-court reports—by stating, for instance, that clogs are manufactured in Lancashire in order that the operatives may dance upon their wives or mothers-in-law with more damaging effect.

The head of the house is autocratic, and almost possesses, like the Roman father, absolute power of life and death over his children. In China the family is the unit of administration; the state being theoretically a federation of families under the paternal government of a common father, the emperor. More will be said on this point when the system of government is under discussion; but it is necessary to allude briefly to the peculiar constitution of the Chinese in order that the position of the family autocrat may be thoroughly comprehended. There is really no country in which the administrative functions are more completely decentralized than is the case with China. Every official is held responsible to the one placed immediately over him; and at the same time the higher functionaries are answerable for everything that is suffered to occur through the negligence or incapacity of their subordinates. The people, however, pay very little attention to the mandarins, provided they are not unduly interfered with. They are accustomed to manage their own affairs, and exercise a measure of local self-government which is unparalleled elsewhere. The mandarins may be regarded more as the figureheads of the political system, who take credit or blame according to the tranquillity or disorder of their district.

This leaves an enormous power in the hands of the people; but the prudence of the arrangement can hardly be denied in the face of the remarkable tranquillity which has, with few exceptions, been enjoyed throughout the empire for many centuries. Local affairs are entrusted to village or district

A PEASANT'S WIFE

councils, and the most worthy person for the office is elected mayor by the suffrages of the community. These local authorities exercise a far wider range of functions than is comprised in the fulfilment of ordinary municipal duties. They adjudicate on all civil matters within their jurisdiction, and act as arbitrators in commercial disputes. Professor Douglas also states that they grant divorces between husband and wife. Criminal cases are generally left to be dealt with by the public tribunals; but even here the village community will sometimes step in, and undertake the punishment of the culprit on their own account.

By far the greater number of delinquents are, however, dealt with in the family circle; and it is only the incorrigible offenders who, having proved themselves to be unamenable to domestic influences, are usually handed over to the district magistrates for more effectual correction. These family tribunals are so much respected that a mandarin will almost invariably ask if the cases before him have already been tried by them; and where this has occurred, he will take their judgments into as much consideration as the present system of selling justice will permit. It must not be supposed, however, that the head of the family always acts in an arbitrary manner and entirely upon his own initiative. The other members of the home circle possess, at least, a consultative voice in the conduct of its affairs; besides which, in cases where the mother of the family autocrat is still living, the greatest possible respect is paid to her opinion, which often acts as a salutary check upon masculine despotism. The excellence of this system, which does more towards the reclaiming of malefactors than our method of ostracising them by the disgrace of constant imprisonment, is exhibited in the comparative rarity of capital punishment in China. It is customary to send criminals who have been condemned to death to Peking, where the emperor investigates each case before signing the warrant for execution. And, in spite of the fact that mere homicidal intention is, where it has

been satisfactorily proved, punishable by death, there are seldom more than a couple of hundred of these criminals—out of a total population of nearly four hundred millions—annually handed over to suffer the extreme penalty of the law.

Primogeniture—which, everybody will admit, carries many injustices with it—does not exist in China. Sons possess equal rights of inheritance; the only difference being that the eldest, on the decease of his father, takes his place as head of the household and is entrusted with the sacred duty of performing the ancestral rites. The others continue to reside in the house with their wives and families, the establishment being kept up by their united labour. If, however, a division of the property takes place, each son receives an equal share; and the widow, if she be alive, is entitled to a double portion. This does not leave any provision for the girls; but it is customary to give them a suitable dowry on their marriage, and until that event takes place they remain at home as before.

The fact that Chinese parents settle the nuptials of their children without consulting their wishes has already been mentioned. To the European mind this sounds very barbarous when stated in cold blood; although everybody knows that things are frequently arranged in much the same way over here. It does not appear improbable, however, that parental wisdom may make a wiser choice than the inexperience of youth; and it may be said, at any rate, the custom being so deeply rooted in Chinese society, that provided it works harmoniously and the young people are contented to have their partners selected for them, no great evil is done. Every institution has its abuses, and no doubt it happens that daughters are often made the subject of mere commercial transactions in China. In that case they are not much worse off than many equally unfortunate girls in countries where complete freedom is supposed to be exercised in these matters.

It seldom happens, in fact, that children refuse to cheerfully acquiesce in the wishes of their parents. The first precept

which is inculcated in a child is that of implicit obedience to those in authority. The whole of his education and bringing-up is founded upon that sentiment, which remains in after-life the most pronounced and universal characteristic of the entire population. The works of Chinese moralists on this topic alone would form an immense library, and the instances quoted by them of filial devotion are legion. The child is brought up not only to render implicit obedience to the will of his parents, but with a feeling of intense gratitude for the care and affection which have been lavished upon him during his infancy. This parental love he endeavours to repay with interest. When the parents are old and no longer capable of working, it becomes the duty of the son to support them by his labour, and to make their declining years as comfortable as he is able.

An anecdote, illustrative of a son's devotion, is related by a Chinese author in the following words:—

A person of the name of Ho Lun continually mourned for his father, whom he had lost for some years. He was one night surprised by a robber, whom he unresistingly permitted to take all his property; till seeing him about to lay hold of a copper stew-pan, "Do me the favour," said he to him, "to leave me those utensils to get my dear mother's breakfast in the morning." The thief was so much abashed, that he not only left the stew-pan, but restored all the rest, saying as he went off, "I should certainly bring some curse upon my head by robbing so good a son." It is also stated, that, from that moment, he renounced his iniquitous profession, and returned to the path of virtue.

It is not only upon parents that these dutiful sentiments are lavished. If all accounts be true, China must be an earthly paradise for mothers-in-law. Williams gives a story, translated from the moralist Luhchau, which not only indicates the services rendered by a wife to her husband's mother, but also shows that an extraordinary deference and respect are often paid to her.

Loh Yang travelled seven years to improve himself, during which time his wife diligently served her mother-in-law and supported her son

at school. The poultry from a neighbour's house once wandered into her garden, and her mother-in-law stole and killed them for eating. When the wife sat down to table and saw the fowls she would not dine, but burst into tears; at which the old lady was much surprised, and asked the reason. "I am much distressed that I am so poor and cannot afford to supply you with all I could wish, and that I should have caused you to eat flesh belonging to another." Her parent was affected by this, and threw away the dish.

A reproof could not have been administered with greater delicacy.

The family community is so cherished an institution that it is never dissolved without the consent of all its members, and in no case unless the children are of full age. Quarrels and dissensions about the inheritance are often the cause of disruption; but when several brothers are living under one roof, and possess wives and children of their own, they often agree to separate for mutual convenience. It also happens at times that unruly members of the family circle are expelled from home by way of punishment. It is the most severe sentence which can be pronounced by the domestic tribunal, and is only taken advantage of in extreme cases, where repeated admonitions and castigation have failed to produce the desired effect. To the Chinaman suicide is generally preferable to exile; and he is often permitted to choose between the two evils. It is by no means unusual for Chinese emigrants, who have expatriated themselves on account of poverty or for some other reason, to commit suicide in order to join the community at home without loss of time. In explanation of this strange custom, it must be remembered that little distinction is made by the Chinese between the living and the dead. The family circle consists not only of the living members, but of the generations of ancestors who have gone before. Their souls are supposed to inhabit the old home, and to exercise a salutary and benignant influence on posterity. By courting death, therefore, the emigrant believes that he will be swiftly reunited to those who are dear to him.

Englishmen who are apt to plume themselves on possessing a pedigree which goes back a score of generations, would be astonished to find nearly every Chinese peasant well acquainted with his family history for half a dozen centuries or more. Yet such is the case; and not only would the peasant be able to give the names of his progenitors reaching back into the dim recesses of the past, but he could furnish a complete history of each individual into the bargain. The biographies of ancestors are inscribed in volumes containing the family records, and they are read aloud in rotation at the frequent gatherings which take place for the observance of the ancestral rites, in the same way that the lessons are read in our churches. By this means the history of each ancestor becomes known to his descendants, and often serves as a moral example for them to follow. These family gatherings usually terminate in the arbitration of disputes or the punishment of a member against whom some complaint has been brought. It is always open to the culprit who thinks he has not been judged fairly to bring his grievance before the magistrates. That this is not often done may be well imagined; for the injustice of the domestic tribunal would be a small matter compared with the possibilities of mandarin extortion. Besides which, it is considered politic by the authorities to respect the decisions of the family autocrat as much as possible. The exercise of home jurisdiction saves the public officials a great deal of labour, and tends to keep order in the district; which is, from the mandarin point of view, the most desirable thing of all. Another circumstance which discourages the people from seeking public justice is the fact that both plaintiff and witnesses, as well as the defendant, are popped into prison until the trial comes off. "It is far from uncommon," remarks Mr W. H. Wilkinson, in his annotations to Yuan Hsiang-fu's jottings about the English, "to read in an official report to the throne that a case has been closed because all parties to it 'have died in

prison.'" There is, in fact, a Chinese proverb which says: "Mandarins and the law are not intended for honest people."

When a peasant is selecting a site for his house, his first care is to conform to the ordinances of the Feng-Shui. These words signify wind and running water; and the prescribed rules, which have reference to the topographical relations between these elements and the proposed building, are a mixture of superstition and practical observation. Nobody seems to have the least idea as to the meaning or significance of the Feng-Shui, but it is generally admitted that its conditions are fulfilled with advantage. A primary article of faith appears to be that a house should face south; and although the reason given by the professors of the science may be that it will not in that position interfere with the convenience of the Feng, it is quite obvious that to be sheltered from the cold north winds is an extremely desirable thing. There is more mystery in the veto which is placed on erecting a building so that flowing water, within a certain distance, runs parallel to the front of it; and perhaps this superstition may be considered on a par with the dread many people have of beginning anything important on a Friday.

The construction of the house is no less remarkable, according to our notions of the builder's trade, than are the conditions which regulate its position. No foundations are laid; and the first thing to be erected is the roof, which rests on a kind of scaffolding, the ends of the poles being planted on flag-stones. The walls are then built, and the bricks laid on the paved ground—after the fashion employed by children when they are playing at making houses. Glazing the windows is a Western innovation which has not had time to secure universal adoption; but the Chinese have found an adequate substitute in the use of thinned-out oyster-shells and specially prepared paper. These admit light, but are in other respects opaque. It may readily be supposed that these flimsy structures are not

distinguished for their durability. Travellers in China have, in fact, often remarked on the comparative newness of the houses. Beyond some pagodas, few Chinese buildings can lay claim to anything approaching antiquity. The style of architecture has, however, remained unaltered for centuries, and makes up in picturesqueness what it lacks in stability. The roofs of the better class of houses are made of coloured tiles; while those of less pretentious dwellings are simply thatched. Their most characteristic feature is the manner in which the edges are turned up and the corners ornamented with dragons and other grotesque figures.

A MANDARIN'S HOUSE

Comfort — in the luxurious sense which we apply to the word —can hardly be said to exist in the interior of a Chinese home. There are no carpets, the floors being made of wooden planks, brick-work, or pounded clay. Chairs, which have been known to the Chinese as articles of furniture for hundreds of years, are not intended for rest or enjoyment, which must be sought cross-legged on a cushion or on a hard divan made of bricks. The latter is hollow, and in cold weather acts as a stove and bedstead combined; which is perhaps as near an approach to luxury as the Chinese are capable of getting. But this advantage would be wholly outbalanced for the European by the pillow on which his head

would have to repose. This instrument of torture consists of a nice hollow piece of hard bamboo, which serves for a repository of valuables as well as an encouragement of nightmare. The houses being built of a single story, there are happily no stairs to climb; and with this item the sum of domestic comfort may be looked upon as exhausted.

To map out the daily routine of such a vast and variable population as that of China, or to give a specimen *menu* for the empire, would not be practicable. But one might take as typical of the well-to-do peasantry the family of Wang-Ming-Tse, with whom Simon became intimately acquainted during his residence in a village in Fukien, and of whom he has given a comprehensive account in his interesting work, "La Cité Chinoise."

They rose at daybreak, the children politely assisting at their parents' toilette, and sat down to a breakfast of fish, rice, and vegetables—tea being reserved until the meal was over. A light lunch was served at midday, consisting of much the same dishes, though sometimes with the addition of pork or duck. The third meal, which was eaten about four o'clock in the afternoon, was rather more substantial and corresponded more nearly with the dinner of European countries. At seven o'clock supper was taken; and at this meal, in addition to fish and vegetables, rice wine was handed round hot. The servants ate their food at the same times, but were placed at a separate table.

After meals the members of the family dispersed to their various occupations. The women attended to the domestic work, to which was added the care of the pigs and fowls. During harvest time they would assist the men in the arduous task of crushing the grain; and plenty of occupation was always at hand for spare moments in the shape of spinning, and weaving, and sewing for the household requirements. The men worked in the fields, incessantly occupied with the multifarious duties of husbandry; and during the winter evenings, when the calls on their time were not so heavy, they made straw slippers and fishing-nets, which were afterwards sold. Wang managed the farm, while his wife looked after the house and regulated the family expenditure. But the paramount voice in the household was exercised by Wang's mother until she reached the mature age of ninety, when she voluntarily abdicated in favour of her son.

CHAPTER IX

THE OLD CHINESE WORKMAN

The West to be opposed by Industrial Weapons—Extraordinary Industry of the Chinese—Practical Absence of Machinery—Cheerfulness under Poverty—Strange Occupations—Water Carriers—The Feast of Lanterns—How Ink is made—The Manufacture of Paper—Literary Taste of the Chinese a Discouragement to the Output of Trash—Method of Printing Books—Trades' Unions and the Conditions of Labour.

THE weapons with which China will fight the West are industrial. We are too much accustomed in Europe to look upon the maintenance of supremacy or international balance as a matter entirely of armaments. With the greatest caution and solicitude we watch the military and naval progress of other nations. An improvement in the engines of destruction is immediately followed by the adoption of a similar advantage by rival Powers; and the addition of an army corps or a battle ship to the defensive strength of one country is instantly met by a corresponding increase in the naval or military armaments of its neighbours. But the means should not be confounded with the end, and one must not neglect to bear in mind the fact that the ultimate conquest of a nation does not rest upon force of arms. An excellent illustration of this truism has been afforded by China herself in the history of the Manchu conquest. What has become of the conquerors? They have been literally absorbed by the people whom they subjected; they have been compelled to adopt their language, their manners, and

their customs; they have disappeared, swallowed up and assimilated by the civilized masses who opposed industry and overwhelming vitality to the rude assaults of the sword.

We laugh at the bows and arrows with which the Chinese soldiers are still armed; we deride their antiquated match-locks, and the sham cannon which frown upon us from their battlements with all the terror-inspiring qualities of cardboard. But we forget that Maxim guns and Lyddite shells will not sweep scores of millions of the most industrious and plodding workers in the world off the face of the earth; that it is with them we shall have ultimately to reckon, and not with the paper cannon or bows and arrows out of which we are deriving so much harmless amusement now. The future of China will not be decided by the trained armies and iron-clad fleets of Europe, but by the qualities and resources of the Chinese people. If we wish to solve the problem of the Far East, it is upon the industrial capabilities of the Chinese Empire that our attention must be riveted; and the most important factor in their development can be no other than the Chinese workman.

Fortunately on this point there is an exceptional and wonderful unanimity of opinion. There is not an authority—from the globe-trotter who has spent a few days at a treaty-port, to the missionary who is intimately acquainted with life in the interior—who has not borne testimony to the marvellous perseverance and unflagging industry of the working classes in China. At an hour when the whole of Europe may be said to slumber, the labourers and artisans of the Middle Kingdom are busy at their daily occupations. Even the native merchant at Shanghai has completed half the day's business before his foreign *confrère* is sitting down luxuriously to a late breakfast.

Nearly all the work is performed by manual labour. Machinery—in the sense in which we understand the word—hardly exists in China. The tools used by the workmen are

A LABOURER

of the simplest construction, and could scarcely be dignified by the designation "labour-saving." There are some foundries which cast cooking utensils, simply constructed mills for crushing grain, and the ingenious irrigation works which have already been described. But if a carpenter wishes to cut up a tree, he patiently divides the trunk with a hand-saw; stone-cutters split and shape huge blocks of granite with no better instrument than an iron wedge, which they dexterously drive along the vein of the stone; books are printed by a simple manual process, a more detailed description of which will be given presently; and thousands upon thousands of hands are employed in weaving the fabrics with which the great bulk of the population is clothed. Yet the results are often equal to those obtained by the aid of our perfected tools and superb machinery; and although more labour is employed in turning out each article, wages are so cheap that there is scarcely a product of European manufacture which could not be produced in China, without the assistance of modern inventions, at a lower price.

The industrial classes are far from being rich. On the contrary, they live, almost to a man, from hand to mouth, working unconscionable hours for the merest pittance of wages. But it is a significant fact, and one which has been too often remarked to be with justice omitted, that this labour is given with the most astonishing cheerfulness. And this animation is an invariable characteristic, quite irrespective of the degree of drudgery or unpleasantness entailed by the occupation. It is exhibited equally by the peasant who spreads the most odious manures on his field, by the artisan who follows his trade far into the night and from the earliest hours of the morning, and by the patient collector of refuse hair. And it can only be ascribed to the inherent energy of the Chinese race, and to the respect for labour which is inculcated in the individual from infancy.

The occupations which give employment to the millions of

the cities and towns who are not engaged in agriculture are numerous. In addition to the industries which provide for the various needs of the population, there are also special callings which are scarcely to be found elsewhere. Such are, for instance, the collectors of refuse hair and waste paper, who are not to be confounded with the *chiffonniers* who make a trade of picking up everything that possesses a saleable value indiscriminately. The refuse hair, whether it is obtained from the tail of a horse or the combings of a human being, is used to make false queues which are attached to the remaining tufts of the aged. For the bald individual, however, nothing can be done, as the fixing of the queue is dependent upon the possession of at least a few privately-owned hairs. The collection of paper scraps, on the other hand, is due, not to vanity, but to the deep veneration with which all printed matter is regarded. This respect for learning and scholarship, impressed on the minds of even the lowest and least educated classes, is one of the extraordinary results of the unchecked development of this ancient civilization. The contempt with which the masses of our labouring population regard *les belles lettres* contrasts strangely with the ingrained deference which is paid by the Chinese people to all literary attainments, and which is even extended by them to any waste pieces of paper containing the precious symbols of knowledge. These latter are religiously gathered together by individuals who make this duty their particular trade, and are then usually carried to the temples, where they are burnt with befitting solemnity.

Large numbers of coolies find employment as water-carriers in times of drought. The water used for drinking purposes is generally collected in jars from the ordinary rainfalls. But when this provision gives out during dry seasons, it has to be fetched from lakes or pools in the neighbourhood. This water does not as a rule provide wholesome drinking; but as the Chinese invariably boil it for tea or for similar infusions, it does them little or no harm. The European, however, has to exer-

cise great care that he does not imbibe this alluvial concoction in a raw state, as it might then be provocative of unpleasant or even dangerous consequences. Thousands of men, women, and children are engaged in making lanterns; a trade in which, perhaps, more ingenuity and imagination are exhibited than in any other. The demand for these well-known productions of the Middle Kingdom is immense. Not only are palaces and houses illuminated by them to a large extent, but there is every year a great festival called the Feast of Lanterns, for which an enormous number has to be manufactured. This festival is supposed to have originated in remembrance of an emperor, who was so fond of pleasure that its interruption by the division of night and day annoyed him intensely. He therefore built a palace from which the light of the sun was rigorously excluded, and caused the interior to be illuminated by innumerable lanterns. This neglect of public affairs enraged the people, who dethroned the emperor and destroyed his palace. And in memory of this happy riddance they instituted the Feast of Lanterns. Another legend attributes its origin to the daughter of a mandarin, who had fallen into the water, being vainly sought for by the aid of lanterns; an event which evoked so much sympathy that it was determined to perpetuate its remembrance by a public festival.

An excellent example of what the Chinese workman can accomplish by mere manual dexterity is furnished by the printing trade and the allied manufactures of paper and ink. The latter substance, which is popularly known to us as Indian ink, is made of lamp-black mixed into a paste with glue. The paste is then hardened in a mould, whence it emerges in the familiar form of oblong sticks. The disagreeable smell caused by the hogs' grease from which the lamp-black is made, is corrected by adding musk or some other scented ingredient. The desk and writing-materials used by a Chinaman are called Pau-tse, or the "four precious things." They consist of a marble slab, with a well contain-

ing water into which he dips the stick of ink before rubbing off what is required, a brush, paper, and ink. Practised men of letters write at an astonishing speed, in spite of the elaborate symbols and the exquisite neatness and accuracy which are considered the attributes of good penmanship. A somewhat different process to the foregoing is used in the manufacture of printing ink. The lamp-black is first dried in the sun and then steeped in spirit liquor. To give it the necessary fluid consistency, it is then mixed with water tempered by a little liquid glue. This vegetable ink of the Chinese is incomparably the best in the world, although less durable than ours, and of course a large traffic is done in inferior imitations.

The consumption of paper in China is prodigious. In addition to its use for printing and writing, the walls and ceilings of rooms are covered with it; those who can afford to do so having them repapered every year. It is also used in window-frames instead of glass. The Chinese manufacture it from all kinds of substances. The best paper is made from the cotton-shrub, and a great deal is also prepared from bamboo. All the processes necessary to the manufacture are undertaken with the simplest contrivances. The outer bark of young bamboo shoots is peeled off, and the latter are then sliced up into narrow strips. These are steeped in a pond of muddy water for a fortnight, until they have become quite soft. They are then washed a second time, and reduced to filaments; after which they are dried in the sun and allowed to bleach. These shreds are steamed in large coppers, and then pounded into a pulp by a pestle which is usually worked by a lever. A glutinous substance is then added to the pulp, and the two ingredients are thoroughly mixed together. This liquid is poured into a large reservoir, and the workmen skim off the surface by dipping in moulds constructed of fine threads of bamboo stretched on a steel frame. Directly the moulds have been drawn out and allowed to drain, the sheets of paper are deposited. The remaining operations consist in draw-

ing the sheets through alum water, in order to harden them and prepare the surface to take ink, and finally in drying them by the heat of a furnace. The paper made by the Chinese is so thin that it can only be printed on one side. That which is made from bamboo has also the disadvantage of being liable to get moth-eaten. Consequently, books have frequently to be taken off the shelves, beaten, and afterwards exposed to the sun.

Most people might be inclined to find fault with what they would term the antiquated method employed by the Chinese in their printing. But it has its advantages, nevertheless. The output of literature could not be so great in China, under the present conditions of the printers' trade, as it is in this country. There is a small, but select, number of individuals who would consider this a plain indication of Chinese superiority, at least as far as literary taste is concerned; and who would welcome the enormous reduction of books necessitated by the abolition of presses and the adoption of printing by hand. The Chinaman delights in his classics, and generally knows them by heart; while the least educated are familiar with many of the sayings of their ancient sages. The issue of a quantity of badly written trash would not therefore create so many millionaires in China as it has made here, where the inferior article turned out by our defective school system has the finishing touches put to his education by all the useless balderdash that can be chopped up and printed, instead of his taste being elevated—as it might be even with substantial profit—to the appreciation of something better.

The Chinese do not use movable type, except in a few rare instances, but engrave separate blocks of wood with the contents of each page. The number of their characters is so enormous, that it would be useless to have them ready-made, after the fashion of the letters of our alphabet, which are limited to twenty-six and can be used over and over again for the composition of every word in the language. There

is also an advantage to be considered in the use of stereotyped plates: the letters and words cannot get misplaced, marring sense and clearness, which is often the case when movable type is employed. The method of preparing the block is simple in the extreme. The work is transcribed by a good calligraphist upon thin, transparent sheets of paper, and these being placed upon the wooden blocks, the engraver proceeds to carve out the wood so as to leave the characters in relief. The beauty of the system is that the engraver can make no errors, provided there are none in the copy. It is not, in any case, very difficult to remedy a mistake. The defective portion of the plate is cut out, and in its place another piece of wood inserted on which the desired correction has been made. The printing off the block is done by hand; but a skilled artisan can turn out 10,000 copies of the same sheet in one day. The method is as follows: a brush is dipped into ink and then rubbed over the surface of the plate; when this has been done, a sheet of paper is laid upon the block, and a gentle pressure caused by the passing over of a soft brush. This brings out the characters evenly, and with the necessary distinctness. The plates will throw off thirty or forty thousand copies without requiring to be retouched.

WAYSIDE GOSSIP

The native artisan works leisurely, and with a total disregard of saving time. His labour is given cheerfully for

low wages, and he is able to work for long hours on what to a European would be a starvation diet. It cannot be said that he is ground down or oppressed. He is, on the contrary, quite as able to take care of himself as the British operative. The value of combination is as well known to the Chinese as it is to us, and is carried by them to even greater lengths. Not only do the trades form guilds for their protection, but the workmen organize themselves frequently, if not invariably, into bodies which bear the closest resemblance to our trades' unions. They are able, in this way, to resist the tyranny of those who are in a position to exercise it; and if they work for low money wages, it is because the cost of living in China is one-tenth what it is in this country, and a sum which sounds to us like the merest pittance provides them with all the necessaries of life which they require.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW CHINESE OPERATIVE

Native and European-owned Cotton Mills—Chinese Prejudice against Machinery compared with British Outcry when Railways first proposed—Adaptability of the People to Change—Skill in Native Handicrafts an Immense Advantage in learning Mill Work—A Warning to Lancashire—Conditions of L abour in Native Mills—Low but Sufficient Wages—The Employment of Young Children—Characteristics of Chinese Operative likely to give him Future Predominance.

THE question whether it be possible to take the Chinese workman—accustomed to labour slowly without machinery, and doubly hostile to foreign innovation and to methods which seem to threaten to deprive thousands of their employment—and to make a new man of him, has been amply and satisfactorily answered. Cotton mills have now been established in different parts of the Yang-tse region, some being controlled by Chinese merchants, while others are owned and superintended by Europeans. The former do not offer a fair test of the capabilities of Chinese operatives. "In Chinese-owned mills," report the members of the Blackburn mission appointed to nquire into the state of British trade in China, "one is surprised to see in every department numbers of richly-dressed, indolent gentlemen, lolling about, or deeply engrossed in the study of Chinese classics. Inquiry from the English manager elicits the information that these are the friends of the controlling officials, and that, although they know absolutely nothing of the work—in fact, being literati, they have a profound

contempt for manual labour of any kind—they are all on the pay list, as superintendents, overseers, and as upper hands, with similar euphonius titles." These ornamental directors come and go as they please, being quite satisfied that regularity on their part should be confined to the drawing of their salaries. In native-owned mills which are placed under the supervision of a European no more harm is done by these parasites than the necessitating of useless expenditure. But in cases where everything is left to Chinese management, the effects are far more disastrous: the machinery is neglected and allowed to get out of order; the superintendents compose essays; the operatives are neither efficiently looked after nor properly treated; and the accounts are so badly kept in most instances that the management is absolutely ignorant of the total weekly output.

Everything has been done by foreign owners to make their mills comfortable, hygienic, and complete as to modern improvements. The best machinery, engines, and other appliances have been imported from Lancashire; electric light is installed throughout the buildings; and ample space has been provided for the operatives. The Chinese government naturally gave as little encouragement as possible to an innovation which threatened China with an industrial revolution, and at one time even contemplated the imposition of an excise duty of 10 per cent. on the yarn produced at the new mills. Wiser counsels, however—most probably in the shape of foreign pressure—were allowed to prevail, and the duty was fixed at the amount which is paid on yarn imported into the country from India, Japan, and other places. Before the Japanese war there were half a dozen cotton mills in operation run by native merchants. By the treaty of Shimonoseki, however, the Chinese were compelled to remove the restrictions which prevented foreigners from importing machinery; and the result was the erecting of a number of looms in Shanghai and at other treaty ports. At one time it had been thought that there

would be great difficulty in obtaining labour, on account of the distrust with which machinery was regarded by the mass of the people; a supposition which was justified by the fact that the first cotton mills erected were destroyed by the weavers, who feared the ruin of their trade. But the prejudice was overcome in an astonishingly short space of time, and it was speedily discovered that the new industry would provide employment for many thousands.

Those who are inclined to laugh at the Chinese on account of their horror of steam factories and railway locomotion would do well to recollect the outcry which arose, from one end of Great Britain to the other, when the introduction of a railway system was proposed scarcely more than sixty years ago. The objections urged by intelligent men of all classes in this country were far more ludicrous than the dislike evinced by the Chinese to have their burial places disturbed, or violence done to the rules of the Feng-Shui. A great lawyer declared that it would be impossible to start a steam-engine in a gale of wind "either by poking the fire, or keeping up the pressure of steam till the boiler is ready to burst." Medical men drew a ghastly picture of the injury which would be done to the public health through the gloom and damp of tunnels, the shrieking of whistles, the whirring of the machinery, and the dismal glare of the locomotives. It was stated that houses would be set on fire by the sparks from passing engines, and that they would be crushed by falling embankments. The country gentlemen were terrified at the prospect of their game preserves being destroyed by the poisonous exhalations from the locomotives which would rush through their properties, and firmly believed that cows would be frightened permanently off their feed, and that hens would refuse to lay their eggs under the new conditions. Many people even went so far as to express fears that the sky would become completely obscured by the smoke vomited upwards by the fiery monsters.

All these absurd and ridiculous prophecies contrast very

much to our disadvantage with the quiet and really justifiable opposition of the Chinese. We are apt to forget that modern inventions grew upon us, so to speak, by degrees; that one thing succeeded another in such a manner that the natural process of evolution can hardly be said to have been violently disturbed. In fact the most sudden transformation which has been effected in this country was brought about by the abolition of the corn laws, when the agricultural interest was killed and the whole resources of the country poured into industrial enterprise. But we wish to inflict a far greater shock on the Chinese, who have no Manchester school to enlighten them, and who believe that the happiness and contentment of the majority are aims better worth pursuing than the production of the utmost wealth that the country is capable of yielding. These may seem perverse or foolish notions to us, who are accustomed to look upon the enjoyment of life as synonymous with a good balance at the bank; but we must allow that the Chinese are probably as dogmatic in their views as we are in ours, and that they have as perfect a right to give expression to their opinions.

The attitude of the authorities in China need not be taken into account: it is always prompted by motives of self-interest; but one must acknowledge that the masses of the population have on the whole behaved with reason and moderation. Angry demonstrations, accompanied by violence, are unavoidable when the means of existence appear to be threatened; and when one considers the vast difference—in living, in civilization, and in modes of thought—between the Europeans and the Chinese, it is really a matter of astonishment that things have gone so rapidly since the wars of 1860 and 1895.

The history of the progress of these pioneers of machinery shows how quickly the Chinese people are able to adapt themselves to change. Of late years, in fact, the supply of factory hands has been vastly in excess of the demand. The labouring population has soon discovered that better wages

and more permanent employment are offered by the new mills, and consequently there is no lack of willing operatives. One must recollect, however, that fresh hands have to be taught their work before they are of any use. At first, when factories were opened by British capitalists, there was a tremendous competition amongst the various managers to get hold of each other's operatives. This led to a rise of wages; and things came ultimately to such a pass through the pursuit of this short-sighted and suicidal policy, that the rival companies were obliged to arrive at a compromise, whereby a maximum rate of wages was agreed upon, and a covenant entered into to refrain in future from further competition of the kind.

It was soon discovered that the Chinese workmen were not only willing to learn, but that their previous training in native handicrafts made them admirably fitted for the task. The extent to which division of labour has been carried in European countries, where the average mechanic is capable of doing only one particular kind of work, such as the making of a pin's head or the labelling of a matchbox, makes it difficult for us to grasp the fact that the average Chinaman is proficient in several trades and can easily turn from one occupation to another. That is one of the arguments employed by the Chinese against our industrial methods. If, they say, a factory ceases working and the hands are consequently thrown out of employment, the latter have to starve, because they have been taught only one kind of work, and if that fails them they have nothing to fall back upon. And another objection they urge is the undeniable fact that individual character is sacrificed by the labourer being narrowed down to a single function, which must tend to make him into a mere machine. However that may be, it is certain that this versatility of the Chinese renders them adaptable to all kinds of delicate and complicated mill work. It is stated that a new hand is just as easily taught to run one kind of machine as another; and when the delegates of the Blackburn commercial mission inspected the mills,

they were struck by the ease with which the operatives looked after the several machines and carried on the necessary operations.

In criticising the quality and efficiency of Chinese labour, the Lancashire experts admitted that on the whole it is greatly inferior in productiveness to the high standard attained in the mills at home. But in this connection it is well to quote the warning remarks contained in their official report:—*

"It seems to us," they observe, "that this question of the efficiency, price, and supply of Asiatic labour is of the utmost importance to Lancashire, for the real point is, not what its present value is, but what it may become; that it is not about the present imperfections, but about the ultimate comparative perfectness to which this labour will attain in the near future. For we must not forget that every mill erected in China is a training school for the greater perfecting of a mass of labour that is for the moment more abundant than the demand. The system of apprenticeship, which is universal throughout China, is already taking root in the new industry, and the hundreds of young children now at work are destined to become skilful, trained hands in the future."

There is no legislation in China to control the hours or conditions of labour. Every man is at liberty to sell his labour at whatever price and on any terms he pleases. Protection lies wholly, and not unreasonably, in the power of combination, which has always been found to work as well as one could expect where conflicting interests are at stake. The mills are kept going night and day, which necessitates the operatives working in two shifts. Eleven hours are put in by each set; but in the day-time there is an interval of one hour for dinner. At night there is no break at all; the work-people taking the small amount of refreshment they then require, whenever they get the chance. A week's holiday is given at the Chinese New Year, when the mills stop working altogether. One of the chief difficulties in dealing with the Chinese is getting them to understand punctuality and the importance of

* "Report of the Mission," H. Neville and H. Bell's section. 1896-97.

time. To them the delay of even a few days seems a trifle, as those who have indulged in junk-travelling are well aware. Hence it has been found very troublesome to get the mills started again when the holidays are over, as the factory hands cannot be brought to understand that it matters whether they turn up a day sooner or later.

The wages paid to these native work-people are so low as to sound ludicrous in European ears. The average hand does not receive more than fivepence for the day's work, while children, who are employed at ages varying from eight to thirteen years, earn less than half that sum. How can a man be expected to live upon half-a-crown a week? it will be asked. The Lancashire operative is highly discontented with earning nearly twice that amount in one day; and even the patient, long-suffering Chinaman would surely refuse to work prolonged hours for a wage on which he could not even comfortably starve. But the value of money in China is ten times what it is here. A bowl of cooked rice, which will serve a labourer for his dinner, can be obtained for less than a halfpenny; a duck or a fowl in the interior of the country costs fourpence or fivepence; a straw hat may be purchased for a penny, a pair of shoes for three-halfpence, and a wadded winter outfit for seven or eight shillings. In fact, in the words of Messrs Neville and Bell, "a Chinaman, with fivepence per day coming in, will be well fed, well clothed, well housed, will smoke more opium than is good for him, and will be able to indulge in theatre-going and other social extravagances to his heart's content."

A reprehensible feature in this industrial innovation is the facilities which are given for the employment of child labour. The early age at which children are engaged to work in the mills has been stated above; and it remains to be said that, in consequence of the cheapness of their labour, occupation is found for large numbers of them. State protection is much needed. The deplorable results of permitting the employment

of young children are too well known in this country to need more than a passing allusion. To take them away from school at the moment when their minds are most susceptible to education is not only shameful, but ruinous to national interests. And if Chinese children are to be sacrificed to the commercial greed of the foreign speculator, the introduction of reforms into China will be in the long run a disastrous thing for the welfare of the people.

This newest product of China's contact with the West—the Chinese operative—is, as everybody must observe, a factor that will have to be seriously reckoned with in the future. He will work cheerfully, for eleven hours at a stretch, on nothing more substantial than a bowl of rice. The moderate wages for which he is willing to sell his labour are yet sufficient to provide for his modest requirements. The cheap cottons which form his clothing; the abundant rice which is his staple food; the opium or tobacco that solaces him when work is over—these are all he wants, and are easily procurable for the few pence he receives in remuneration for his services. In constitution he is tougher than any European, and can endure without a murmur fatigue which to an English labourer would be unsupportable and injurious. His skill in various handicrafts makes him capable of learning the most delicate and complicated kinds of machine work with the greatest rapidity and aptitude. The ingenious contrivances commonly used by native artisans have fitted him to readily grasp the more intricate details of European machinery; and the intelligent Chinese mechanic is qualified to become an engineer after an apprenticeship which would be considered astonishingly brief in this country. To these characteristics one must add the tractableness and docility of the labouring masses in China. Having been brought up to regard obedience as the cardinal virtue, they easily submit themselves to authority. For that reason Chinese mills are not likely to be troubled with the frequent strikes so dear to the British workman. The men will not allow them-

selves to be tyrannically oppressed; but they are patient and reasonable, even when made to suffer injustice. And this moderation, coupled with the excellent traits which have been enumerated, threatens to give the Chinese operative the first place among the producers of the future.

CHAPTER XI

THE MERCHANTS, AND THE POWER OF THEIR GUILDS

Profits of British Enterprise in China likely to find their Way into the Pockets of Native Merchants—Personal Probity exemplified by Verbal Agreements—The Shansi Banks—Employés' Families in Pawn—Cash Shops—Mutual Loan Societies—The Guilds and their Origin—Arbitrary Rules—Boycotting the Government—Great Wealth of the Guilds—Uses to which their Funds are put—An irresistible Commercial Force.

THE future of China's foreign trade is largely in the hands of native merchants. British enterprise may be directed to the development of the Chinese Empire's resources; but the question of who is going to ultimately benefit thereby is dependent to a great extent upon the foresight and sagacity of the commercial classes in China. The privately expressed conviction of one of the most experienced and enterprising of English merchants living in the heart of the country, is that all the benefit of developing China's trade and resources will ultimately pass into the pockets of the Chinese themselves. The native merchants exercise, in reality, a power which is quite unexampled in Europe. Their action in commercial matters is unhindered by the central government. In fact they may be said with perfect truth to largely control local administration; and it is generally by their sanction alone that any mercantile disputes are brought before the public tribunals. These weighty powers are not of course wielded by individuals, but result from the formation of those great trade combinations to which allusion has been made in the foregoing

chapter. Of these, more will be said presently. At the moment it will be interesting to note the chief characteristics of the Chinese merchant, and to see how he may individually stand comparison with his European competitor.

On this point no better authority could be quoted than Professor R. K. Douglas, whose opinion is based upon the deep insight afforded by close personal relations when in the consular service.

"The merchants and traders of China," he writes,* "have gained the respect and won the admiration of all those who have been brought into contact with them. For honesty and integrity they have earned universal praise, and on this point a Shanghai bank manager, in lately acknowledging a valedictory address, presented to him on his leaving the country, bore the following testimony: 'I have,' he said, 'referred to the high commercial standing of the foreign community. The Chinese are in no way behind us in that respect; in fact, I know of no people in the world I would sooner trust than the Chinese merchant and banker. . . . I may mention that for the last twenty-five years the bank has been doing a very large business with Chinese at Shanghai, amounting, I should say, to hundreds of millions of taels, and we have never yet met with a defaulting Chinaman.' It was such men as these that built up the commerce which excited the wonder and admiration of Marco Polo and other early European travellers; and it is to their labours and to those of their descendants that the existence of the crowded markets, the teeming wharfs, and the richly laden vessels of the present day are due."

The integrity of the Chinese merchants could not be better exemplified than by the fact that, even in the largest transactions, written contracts are seldom required. Business, involving the risk of enormous sums, is conducted purely on the basis of verbal agreements; and it is not only rare for a native merchant to fail in his engagements, but his defalcation would bring upon him the infliction of the severest penalty by the corporation of which he was a member. In Europe it is related with bated breath, as an instance of the most extraordinary and unprecedented commercial probity, that during

* "Society in China," p. 140.

the war of 1871 the Rothschilds in the beleaguered city of Paris conducted their business with the outside world, through the medium of carrier pigeons, entirely on a system of trust. It is considered by us a remarkable thing to enter into relations with even the most solvent and world-famed firm without proper written security. There would be nothing out of the way in this country for a man to demand a receipt in black and white from his own brother. To the Chinese this is incomprehensible. A merchant's word is all that is needed as security in the weightiest transactions; and although there are exceptional cases in which a documentary warranty is required, as, for instance, where a Shansi bank makes an advance to a trader on the security of the written guarantee of another banker, verbal agreements are the most reputable and commonplace method of doing business.

A MERCHANT

Allusion was made to the banks of Shansi when that province was under discussion; but they are so important a factor in the commercial life of China, that they merit a closer inspection. These banks have been established for centuries, and exercise quite a despotic power. In alluding to them, Mr Little remarks:*

These are the most respectable and strictly managed businesses in the empire; their branches extend to every important city in the eighteen

* "Through the Yang-tse Gorges," 3rd ed., p. 161.

provinces, and their staff numbers several hundreds. I asked him (the manager of the principal bank in Chungking) how he accounted for one firm remaining in existence for nearly three centuries. He replied: "Our rule is strict. Our inside staff are all from Shansi; they are apprenticed, live in the hong, and are never allowed out after nine at night." He said the southern mercantile establishments are more lax. These Shansi banks grant drafts for large sums upon their branches scattered all over the empire, and it is wonderful how, with the slow intercommunication, they manage their finances as they do.

Strict is a mild word to apply to the severe measures which are taken by Shansi bankers in order to insure the fidelity of their employés. When one of the latter is sent out from the head office to manage a branch, his family is held in pawn at headquarters by way of guarantee. He is not allowed to carry on a direct correspondence with the members of his family, but is compelled to make his chief the medium of communication; the latter exercising a kind of censorship over the letters which are forwarded to him for approval, before they are passed on to the proper recipients. After three years the branch managership terminates, and the employé returns to the head office in order to render an account of his stewardship. If he has conducted the business successfully, he is substantially rewarded and restored to the bosom of his family. But if things have gone badly, wife and children are kept in bondage, and he is not allowed to have them back again until he has paid the fine which has been imposed upon him for his misdeeds. It may be taken as strong evidence of the high standard of Chinese morality that this method of enforcing the payment of a fine is found to work satisfactorily. There are countries in which the ransom might possibly be withheld under the circumstances. Mr Bourne states that when an employé has defrauded a Shansi bank no appeal is made to the magistrates, but he is sent home to be tried by the family tribunal. The crime is considered so heinous that such delinquents have sometimes, it is said, been condemned to be buried alive.

It is a curious fact that the Shansi banks do not lend money on mortgages, and rarely on goods or merchandise. They will make advances to mandarins, who wish to purchase promotion, at high rates of interest; and to merchants or (in exceptional cases) private individuals, on personal security. But if a Chinaman wishes to pledge his house or land, he must go to a local bank or cash shop. These minor establishments are in touch with the exchange banks, and in negotiating mortgages of any magnitude borrow from them the money required for the loan; but their business is restricted to making advances and to the exchanging of money. The Shansi bankers confine themselves to the issuing of bills of credit, and to the granting of loans in cases such as those cited above. They dislike receiving money on deposit from the public, for fear it might damage their credit, and make a favour of accepting deposits from their customers.

People who require loans in China do not always go to banks or cash shops. The Chinese have invented an ingenious system of their own. They form themselves into mutual loan societies, in which every member is entitled to borrow a sum of money. Each in turn has the use of a certain amount of capital; and the syndicate fixes the rate of the subscriptions, and the period over which they shall extend, in such a manner that this plan can be carried out. To young men who wish to obtain a start in business, or who have passed the examinations and lack the needful bribe to open the official door, these societies are a great boon. Their existence also serves the useful purpose of preventing borrowers from falling into the clutches of professional money-lenders, and enables honest men, who could not offer the security required by the Shansi banks, to obtain necessary advances without being hampered by the payment of exorbitant interest. It should be particularly noted that in the case of these mutual loan societies no other security is required than the good faith of the borrower; and the fact that instances of disloyalty are extremely rare exemplifies the

remarkable degree to which commercial integrity is carried in China.

An extraordinary contrast to the chaos of Chinese administration is presented by the admirable system of trade organization which prevails throughout the empire. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of guilds. Firstly, the provincial guilds formed by the associated merchants of a particular province; such as, for instance, the Hupeh merchants' guild in Chungking. And secondly, the local guilds representative of each trade. The former were the first to come into existence. But the initial impetus to the formation of guilds was given by the provincial mandarins, who instituted clubs at the capital, where they could be sure of finding congenial society, or meet for the purpose of devising measures to resist the extortions of the central authorities. In a similar way merchants from the same district used to combine with the twofold object of business and pleasure; and out of this movement grew the powerful organizations known as trade guilds.

The functions of a guild are many and varied. The members hold regular meetings, at which matters relating to their particular trade are fully discussed, and regulations framed for the manner in which their businesses shall be conducted. So arbitrary are these rules, that in some cases the price at which a commodity shall be sold is arbitrarily fixed. Members who disposed of their goods at any other than the prescribed price would be severely dealt with; and independent traders who ran counter to the decision of the guild would be crippled by an irresistible boycott. It is no uncommon thing, nowadays, for large companies to systematically crush the smaller fry concerned in the same industry, and to gain gradual command of the market by the ruin of less powerful and wealthy competitors; in fact it is the modern way of doing business in Western countries. But the Chinese guilds can strike swifter and more crushing blows than any of the millionaire syndicates floated here. Their power extends to merchants, dealers, agents,

and shop-keepers, and in fact to everybody interested, however remotely, in a particular trade; and it can be exercised with such instantaneous effect, that the least significant individual may be speedily made to feel the inconvenience of opposing the wishes of the guild. An instance of this power is afforded by the fate which some years ago befell a Shanghai firm, who had established a branch in Hankow for the importation of Indian opium. They received one day a warning from the Swatow opium guild, to the effect that the time had come when the distributing trade in that drug should be entirely in the hands of native dealers. The heads of the firm paid no attention to this threatening communication; but from that moment their Hankow branch was rigorously boycotted, and could not find a single dealer who had the temerity to take its opium. At last the Shanghai house was compelled to withdraw from Hankow altogether, leaving the opium trade at Hankow entirely in the hands of Chinese merchants, where it remains to the present day.

The guilds are most circumspect and cautious in their mode of preconcerting some line of action. When any important question has to be settled, the heads of the influential firms most nearly concerned first meet and discuss the matter amongst themselves. As soon as they have arrived at a solution of the difficulty, they canvass the smaller firms, and endeavour to persuade a sufficient number of them to assent to their proposals. A general meeting of the members of the guild is only called for the purpose of ratifying what has already been privately agreed upon; and if no agreement has been arrived at on account of the number of objectors to the scheme, the matter is simply allowed to fall through without being brought before a meeting at all. Quite as much caution is generally exercised in carrying out a policy of boycott, or in meting out punishment to outsiders who have incurred the displeasure of the guild. It often happens that the government comes into collision with these commercial authorities,

in which case the latter generally get the best of it. In the report of the Swatow imperial maritime customs it is stated that, in 1881, some Swatow merchants were heavily fined for disregarding a customs' rule affecting the examination of cargo. The guild took the matter up, and issued an anonymous letter calling upon merchants to cease all export and import trade unless their demands were complied with. The fight on that occasion ended in favour of the customs; but the immense power of the guild was illustrated by the fact that it kept the entire trade at a standstill for fifteen days. On another occasion, however, the same guild obtained a complete triumph. When an extra provincial likin, called the Battery tax, was imposed in 1890, the collectors sent up from Canton were not only unable to obtain payment of it from any of the Swatow traders, but were so successfully boycotted by the guild that they were unable even to rent a place in which to establish themselves. They were therefore obliged to give up as hopeless all attempts to enforce the objectionable tax, and it was eventually withdrawn altogether by the discomfited authorities.

Some of the guilds are very wealthy. Their funds are derived from a variety of sources. In the first place, there are the entrance fees and subscriptions of members. These vary according to the class to which the latter belong; and each guild naturally frames its own regulations in this respect. The Hanyang guild of Ichang, for instance, charges working-men 30 cash * per month; in addition to which they have to pay an entrance fee of 1000 cash within a month of joining. Should they omit to discharge this obligation, and leave in the corporation's debt, their masters are held responsible. Clerks pay to the same guild a rate of 2 per cent. on their yearly

* Cash are small copper coins, which form the only money in circulation in China. Roughly speaking, about 35 cash are the equivalent of a penny. Travellers suffer much from the inconvenience of having to take large numbers of these coins about with them. The tael is merely a term used to designate a certain weight of silver.

income; but whenever they start in business on their own account they are obliged to give, in addition to the ordinary subscription, 1000 cash for their sign-board. A merchant who was establishing himself in Ichang would have to pay twice this amount for his sign-board, as well as 1000 cash entrance fee. Great care is taken that a merchant or trader, who has just arrived from the place to which the guild belongs, is properly mulcted. The member who reports his arrival with promptitude receives 10 per cent. of the plunder, which takes the shape of a tax of 3 per cent. levied on the value of any trade done by the new-comer during his visit. The financial resources of the guilds are practically unlimited. They levy what taxes they please, and nobody can resist their exactions without bringing upon himself inevitable ruin.

But it must not be supposed that the guilds are always ready to abuse the power they possess. If they are tyrannical in some respects, in others they exercise a most salutory and beneficial supervision over the trades which they represent. False weights and other impostures are put down with the greatest rigour. It is of course to the general advantage of those concerned in a particular trade, that the profits of one individual should not be increased at the expense of the others. Therefore the guilds take the most stringent precautions to insure a high standard of commercial morality; and it is principally thanks to them that the merchants of China have obtained an exceptional reputation for trustworthiness and fair dealing.

The Chinese are extremely fond of feasting and gaiety. Hence a considerable portion of the guilds' revenues are spent on entertainments. It is also considered politic to conciliate the public officials as much as possible; although, as has already been stated, there can be little doubt as to the issue of a conflict between the mandarins, who have few inducements to embroil themselves with anybody, and these wealthy and powerful corporations. Members who have committed a

breach of the rules are often condemned—in addition to the payment of a fine—to provide a theatrical entertainment, or some other distraction, for the amusement of the guild, besides catering for a feast in proportion to the magnitude of the offence. A part of the funds is also devoted to charitable purposes. In this way, members who have become involved in misfortune, or the families of deceased members who have been reduced to poverty by the loss of the bread-winner, are able to obtain liberal assistance; which is also accorded those who are unable to work on account of illness. The guilds may therefore be said, in this sense, to take the place of our insurance companies. Each corporation usually possesses its fire-brigade; and when a house or other building takes fire—a by no means infrequent occurrence in China where dwellings are largely constructed of wood—invaluable help is rendered by the firemen belonging to the nearest guild, who are always held in readiness for such emergencies.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to indicate the important *rôle* which is played by the guilds in the daily life of the Chinese. These influential bodies are not unlike the mediæval trade guilds of Europe, which exercised a real influence over the craftsmen belonging to them. Our city corporations of to-day, although bodies possessing great wealth and distinction, do not in the slightest degree regulate the trades which they nominally represent; and their power is only felt in municipal politics and the turtle market. It is not easy, therefore, for us to realize how potent is the force wielded by these institutions in China; the more so, as the springs are worked with secrecy and mysterious cunning, in which the Chinese are past masters, and against which European diplomacy has vainly striven for the last fifty years. But it is probable that the British merchant has no greater obstacle to encounter than these all-powerful combinations of native merchants. He is completely at their mercy; and it is not too much to say that his existence as a trader is chiefly dependent on their toleration.

When one considers that common action on the part of the guilds could produce a complete suspension of trade throughout the empire, it is impossible not to acknowledge that no great expansion of our commerce in China can take place against the will of the native merchants. Concessions wrung from the authorities at Peking can have no practical value in the face of organized Chinese opposition. So long as vested interests are not interfered with, and the co-operation or neutrality of the natives can be depended upon, things may work harmoniously. But it is not to be expected that the Chinese will willingly permit the profits of these great projected undertakings to find their way into foreign pockets; and in their guilds they certainly possess the means of offering an obstruction which is likely to prove serious, if not—for the present, at least—insurmountable.

CHAPTER XII

THE INFLUENCE OF THE LITERATI

Unemployed Literati the Pests of Society—The Chief Obstacle to Reform—Prince Kung's Proposal to establish a College of Western Science—Opposition of the Literary Class—Attempt to introduce Mathematics into the Public Examinations—Stubborn Resistance of the Literati—A Hopeless Conservatism—Early Training and the Competitive Examinations—Bad Results of Chinese Education—Europe forcing Wrong Kind of Reforms—Benefit to Literati of adopting Western Methods and Sciences.

THE power of the guilds in commercial matters, although its autocratic nature has been fully exhibited, is scarcely comparable to the immense political influence exercised by the literary class in China. The Chinese civil service is, as has been already explained, recruited entirely from among the graduates of the competitive examinations. But it is not by those who are fortunate enough to procure administrative posts that this predominance in public affairs is gained. Of the successful candidates for literary degrees the merest fraction obtain employment, as their number is always vastly in excess of the appointments to be distributed. Consequently there is an enormous class composed of these unemployed and disappointed literati, who, having nothing better to do, become in most cases the mischief-makers of the empire. The only occupations which are otherwise open to them are those of the physician and the trader. These callings are, however, generally considered beneath the dignity of a literary graduate; the merchant being placed theoretically below the manual labourer

AN UNEMPLOYED MEMBER OF THE LITERATI

in the social scale. Consequently these elegant and accomplished scholars are driven to all kinds of shifts in order to pick up a livelihood. They become, in fact, the real pests of Chinese society; and the difficulty of coping with them is enhanced by the privileges attaching to their class. The literati cannot be punished or made answerable for any offence committed by them, until they have been stripped of their degrees by an imperial edict. This provision gives them a free hand, of which they usually avail themselves to the fullest extent. Being considered on an equal footing with the mandarins, in virtue of their qualifications for office, they attach themselves to the yamêns and become the intermediaries of justice. That is to say, they extort money from intending litigants on the understanding that their influence shall be exerted to obtain a favourable judgment from the magistrate.

The chief, if not the only, obstacle to reform in China is the literary class. It was in recognition of this fact that the emperor Chi Hwang-ti, more than two thousand years ago, ordered the classic books to be burnt and cut off the heads of the principal scholars. The whole system of education in China is unfavourable to progress. The object of every student is to learn the teachings of the ancient sages by heart; and the man who has acquired by rote the most comprehensive knowledge of the classics, is held in far greater esteem than one whose memory is less perfect, but who is capable of writing the most erudite original reflections. The men of letters, therefore, who hold the highest place in public estimation are not those who may be personally gifted with literary genius, but mere literary machines whose merit lies in the parrot-like repetition of the wisdom of others. The youth of China is consequently encouraged in every possible way to preserve the traditions of the past, and the acquisition of modern knowledge, or of anything calculated to prove in the slightest degree practical, is absolutely discountenanced. In this way a highly educated, but purely literary, class has been established in China for centuries;

and it has been considered a sufficient expedient for the production of generals and statesmen, that promising young men should be taught—to the exclusion of everything else —to babble off whole books by heart and to compose elegant and flowery essays on topics at least three thousand years old.

There have been, however, enlightened men in China who have foreseen that a new condition of things is arising to which antiquated methods can no longer be applied. The emperor Kanghi was fully aware of this, and he not only tolerated the presence of Jesuit missionaries, but appointed them to important posts where their knowledge of Western science might be of benefit to the country. The successors of this enlightened monarch were memorialized in turn by eminent statesmen, who perceived the advantage of giving the mechanical arts of Europe a place in the Chinese curriculum. In 1866 the late Prince Kung petitioned the emperor Tungche, or one might say the empresses-regent, on the same subject. "These sciences being indispensable to the understanding of machinery and the manufacture of firearms," he writes, "we have resolved on erecting for this purpose a special department in the Tung-wên college, to which scholars of a high grade may be admitted, and in which men from the West shall be invited to give instruction." The memorialist goes on to anticipate that this new departure will be denounced by the reactionists who are ignorant of the necessities of the hour; and he argues that those who understand the times are of opinion that the only way of infusing new elements of strength into the government of China, is to introduce the learning and mechanical arts of Western nations. "Provincial governors such as Tso Tsung-tang and Li Hung-chang," he proceeds, "are firm in this conviction, and constantly presenting it in their addresses to the throne. The last-mentioned officer last year opened an arsenal for the manufacture of arms, and invited men and officers from the metropolitan garrison to go there for instruction; while the other

established in Foochow a school for the study of foreign languages and arts, with a view to the instruction of young men in shipbuilding and the manufacture of engines. The urgency of such studies is, therefore, an opinion which is not confined to us, your servants."

Then follows the diplomatic suggestion that, after all, Western science was derived from China in the first instance. European scholars, declares Prince Kung, have minds adapted to reasoning and abstruse study, so that they were able to deduce from the astronomy which they had borrowed from the Far East the mechanical arts which distinguish modern civilization. There would be nothing derogatory, therefore, in the Chinese applying themselves to studies which had actually been founded by their own sages.

These arguments prevailed, and the Prince's suggestion was carried out. But the result was what might have been expected. The literati could only see in this innovation a blow struck at the ancient system to which they owed their existence. Professors of chemistry, mathematics, modern languages, and so forth, were imported into Peking; but, although the college has since made a moderate amount of headway, it was little short of a fiasco when it was first founded, and the pick of Chinese scholars refused to have anything to do with it. The pride of the literati forbade them to undergo the humiliation of learning from Western barbarians, consequently the new institution was boycotted by the vast majority of them; and only a few blacklegs, so to speak, of inferior capacity, could be found willing to benefit by the new course of instruction.

Twenty years passed before another attempt was made to force educational reforms upon the stubborn body of literati. The initial step was taken, strangely enough, by a member of the Hanlin academy who filled the post of censor at the court of Peking. He memorialized the young emperor Kwangsu, proposing that mathematics should be introduced into the state examinations; and the empress-dowager commissioned the

cabinet, which was presided over by Prince Chun, the father of the reigning sovereign, to deliberate and report upon the document. It is extremely probable that the empress-dowager was herself in favour of some such innovation, and that this fresh move had taken place at her instigation. At all events, the ministers who were intrusted with the matter fully endorsed the opinions of the memorialist, and strongly urged the adoption of his proposals. It was most difficult, they said in their report, to introduce innovations, because there existed established rules governing the selection of graduates at the metropolitan and provincial examinations. In order, however, to encourage young men to apply themselves to Western studies, it was necessary that there should be an efficient system of selection and promotion. "We, the ministers, in our deliberations," they continued, "are aware that the regulations governing the civil competitive examinations cannot be lightly changed, yet, for the sake of encouraging men of ability, the existing methods might be modified." It was then proposed by them that the emperor should direct the provincial literary chancellors to issue at the competitive examinations, besides the subjects usually given in the classics and poetry, a theme on mathematics; and a number of other suggestions was made as to the inclusion of the mathematical graduates in the civil literary examinations. The ministers proceeded to state that those belonging to this latter class "who graduate successfully from the metropolitan examinations will be retained at the capital, and wait for appointments to the Tung-wên college, where they will act as compilers, and devote themselves to further study until they may be sent to travel abroad, or receive diplomatic appointments; selection to be made from time to time in accordance with merit and ability. In this manner those who manage our foreign relations will not be empty babblers, and they will, moreover, excel in usefulness those who are proficients only in Western arts, without the complementary literary qualifications."

It will be acknowledged that no reform could have started under better auspices. The proposed change in the curriculum had been carefully examined into by the most enlightened statesmen in the empire, and had found favour in the highest quarters. Yet they were powerless to impose it upon the community. The literati remained stubborn in their resistance to the introduction of foreign sciences; and the result of their opposition was that the whole scheme proved abortive. Desultory attempts were made here and there to persuade students to take up the study of mathematics; but with no avail.

Without possessing the organization which makes the trade guilds so powerful, the literati are yet able, on account of their mental uniformity, to oppose a solid front to anything in the shape of novelty or change. Their minds are formed in one mould, the same that has served to make Chinese scholars for thousands of years. It may be, therefore, that the literary classes are incapable of shaking off this peculiar heritage of iron-bound convention which has always been their cherished model. The conservatism in which they are encrusted is appalling, and would scarcely find a counterpart even in the most fossilized section of the Tory party in our House of Commons. In an earlier chapter on the general aspect of Chinese civilization a short sketch of the national system of education was given, and although there is much in it which is praiseworthy, it can readily be understood that men who have been grounded in such a school have little chance of becoming independent thinkers. It would be interesting and instructive to trace the evolution of a Chinese reformer, though by no means an easy task; and it certainly is a matter of wonderment that any such should have been produced by the literati before the history of China's relations with foreign Powers.

At the age of six the Chinese boy goes to school, and his first task is to learn by heart the principles of the Chinese constitution, which have been compiled in easy text-books. As soon as

they have been committed to memory, he applies himself to the stupendous labour of mastering the nine classical books. These are studied, and read over and over again, and commented upon, until the student knows the greater part of them by heart; and if he has made up his mind to enter the lists of the competitive examinations, he further perfects himself by writing innumerable essays and verses, until he has acquired the literary elegance and fine penmanship which are the chief aims of every Chinese scholar. But before he is allowed to go up for the examinations he has to show that the family name has remained unsullied for three generations, and that his ancestors do not belong to the interdicted classes, such as actors, mendicants, executioners, and—until quite recently—barbers. The latter profession is becoming quite aristocratic in China, it having been ordained that no self-respecting barber shall in future stoop to the plebeian occupation of shaving customers' chins; and now that barbers may aspire to literary degrees, wealthier Chinamen will be able to afford the luxury of having their pigtails trimmed, and at the same time enjoy quotations from the classics; for which, no doubt, an extra charge will be made.

The number of examinations which has to be undergone before the student is eligible to compete for the final degree of Tsinshih, or "advanced scholarship," would horrify a university man in England, who thinks he has done quite enough in passing his "Little go," graduating in the classical or mathematical tripos, and emerging victoriously from a competitive examination after a further dose of cramming. What would he say to the preliminary trials before the district magistrate, where he would be locked up for five days to write a poem; to undergoing a similar series of ordeals later on in the prefectural city of the department in which he resided; and after this introductory prelude, to being drafted into the provincial capital, where he would be confined night and day in a cell without doors or windows, containing an area of about four feet by five and a half, until he had completed three essays and a poem

on the remotest and most abstruse themes? Nor would his miseries by any means end here. With an interval of one day to allow respiration and enable him to lay in a fresh stock of provisions, he would have to undergo two more spells of solitary confinement, and would be expected, at the end of each, to produce the same number of elegant compositions. The literary degree conferred by the provincial chancellor qualifies the graduate for public office; but in order to compete for the highest honours, it is necessary to undergo a final test at Peking in the spring following the provincial examinations.

"The competitors at this ordeal," writes Professor Douglas,* "commonly number about six thousand, out of which number only about five per cent. obtain the coveted honour. A further examination of the pick of these men, held by the emperor in person, ends in the selection of four scholars, to whom are given the titles of Chwang-yüan, Pangyen, T'anhwa, and Chw'anlu, respectively, and who may be considered as occupying the relative positions of senior wrangler and of the three next in order to him."

Only, one might add, the senior wrangler would not be the best out of a few hundred, but would represent the pick of an empire containing a population larger than that of Europe.

In discussing the characteristics of the working classes, it was shown that, regarded as an industrial factor, the Chinese workman leaves little to be desired. We now have before us the intellectual product of the Chinese system of education, and can in some measure form an opinion as to how far he fulfils the requirements of his position in an economical aspect. Although few people will be disposed to deny that the literati stand on a high level of purely literary scholarship, it could not be asserted by the greatest admirer of the Chinese civilization that their classical attainments are of much, if any, value in assisting social progress or helping to administer the affairs of the empire. There are other causes of the degeneration and corruptibility of government which will have to be considered

* "Society in China," p. 168.

presently; but not the least factor in the notorious weakness and incapacity of the public officials is the absurd system of education which fits them for nothing but ornamental penmanship and elegant verse-making.

It is a question whether we are not trying to force upon the Chinese the wrong kind of reforms. Railways and other mechanical improvements are excellent things in their way; but in order to receive proper benefit from them, it is necessary for people to be socially prepared for the change. Every well-wisher of China must see that without the ultimate adoption of these modern needs the empire will inevitably fall to pieces in course of time. But it should be equally plain that reform must begin from the bottom, and cannot with success and real utility be forced from the top. Prince Kung, and other enlightened Chinese, who knew how much their country was saturated with ancient prejudices and how cautiously they would have to set to work in order to move the wheels of progress, proposed to begin at the beginning. They hoped, by going down to the roots of Chinese stagnation, to produce a healthy and natural revolution. The mischief lay, they clearly perceived, in the national study of classic literature to the exclusion of those sciences which have built up the material greatness of Western nations. When once custom could be broken through, and the literati brought to understand the significance and utility of the mechanical arts of Europe, the rest would follow naturally and in due course. But until the barrier of ignorance and prejudice had been destroyed, it would be useless to expect beneficial results from forcing detested innovations on an unwilling people.

It is quite clear that the literati would be the first to benefit by the introduction of European methods and sciences. The majority of the literary graduates are reduced to poverty in consequence of their failure to obtain posts in the administration, which are infinitesimal compared with the huge number of qualified applicants for state employment. The shifts to

which they are put, in order to scrape together the means of subsistence, have already been alluded to. But the acquisition of some of our branches of knowledge would mean the creation of new professions, which would offer an unlimited field for those educated men whose services are not required for administrative work. When once the science of medicine and surgery was properly understood, the same high qualifications would be insisted upon in China which are enforced elsewhere; and the physician, instead of being looked down upon as a discredited quack, would occupy an honourable position in society. Engineering, military science, and a host of kindred pursuits, would encourage the development and use of talent, and help to rid China of those social pests engendered by the inefficiency of the present system. It should be remembered that in many respects the Chinese are still children, and that they must learn to crawl before they can walk. If they are set prematurely and violently upon their legs, they will not grow into a strong and healthy nation. When the whole social fabric has been changed, the people will perhaps be ripe for the most modern improvements; though it is difficult to conjecture what advantage Great Britain is going to derive from the transformation.

CHAPTER XIII

PATERNAL GOVERNMENT

The Emperor and his Subjects—The Imperial Prerogatives—The Chinese People chiefly Self-Governing—Duties of District Councils—The Two Councils of State—The Tsungli Yamên—A Board of Bluff—Specimen Interview of a Foreign Representative—The Six Executive Departments—The Board of Civil Office—Board of Revenue and the Census Returns—A Board of Politeness—A Sham Department—Two Boards of Hypocrisy—Official Censors and model Educational Authorities.

THE theory of government in China is beautifully simple. The State is a large family of which the emperor is the father. As it is impossible for him to govern his four hundred million children without intermediaries, viceroys and governors are appointed to administer the affairs of the various provinces under his paternal supervision. These, in their turn, need the assistance of subordinate officials to whom their powers are delegated; and by continuing this process until an adequate subdivision has been arrived at, the machinery of government is created. Every official is responsible to his immediate superior, from the lowest rank to the highest; and, last of all, the viceroys and governors have to answer to the emperor himself for the good government of their respective provinces. Confucius laid down that the children of the State should look upon the emperor as their father, and should yield him implicit obedience so long as he fulfilled his obligations towards them. But if the emperor failed in his duty and showed himself to be an unworthy ruler, Confucius declared it to be incumbent

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE TCHA

upon his subjects to rebel against him, and to drive him from the throne as a tyrant, and even to put him to death.

This endurance of the people is the principal limitation which is placed upon the autocratic power of the emperor. The Chinese constitution wears, therefore, a double aspect: it gives the emperor unbounded authority, but imposes on him the necessity of using that authority with fairness and moderation. How far the emperor exercises a political influence, and to what extent he actually interferes in the administration of public affairs, it would be difficult to say. In all probability these matters are more dependent on the strength or weakness of the sovereign's character than on anything else. But his prerogatives are practically those of a despot, although the history of foreign treaties has shown how little can be accomplished by them against the will of the people; and the Chinese certainly give a less comprehensive definition of the "divine right of kings" than the one recently heralded by a near continental neighbour of ours. The emperor can appoint or dismiss ministers of state entirely at his pleasure. He has power of life and death over all his subjects, not excluding princes of the blood; and, although judicial functions are delegated to subordinate officials, no death sentence can be carried out unless the execution warrant be endorsed by the vermilion pencil. Theoretically the emperor is the sole proprietor of the soil, and the land tax paid by the peasant is in the nature of rent. Land out of cultivation belongs to the State; but the latter would not dare to interfere with the vested interests of the peasant proprietors, who in practice enjoy as undisputed an ownership of the homesteads which have belonged to their families for generations, as would be conferred by the possession of unassailable title-deeds in other countries. The only way in which the emperor asserts his universal squiredom, therefore, is by occasionally remitting the taxes of provinces which have suffered from famine or some other terrible visitation; an act which would appear more

meritorious, if it were not perfectly obvious that the afflicted districts would be incapable of paying them in any case. A more important privilege, and one which is really exercised, is the right of nominating the successor to the throne. If the emperor has sons, it is usually from them that he selects the worthiest to succeed him; which by no means implies that the eldest is considered to possess any prior claim, the choice being entirely one of merit. It is not unconstitutional, however, for a monarch to go outside his own family in naming a successor; and there are several instances in history of such disinterested methods of selection having been resorted to, in cases where no worthy heir could be found in the imperial circle.

In judging of the extent to which the emperor of China may be considered omnipotent, one must recollect that between the sovereign and the people an immense lettered bureaucracy acts as intermediary. The two councils of state present for his signature papers which have been specially marked and annotated for his benefit and guidance. He sees things only in the light in which his ministers choose to place them; and, in the case of emperors such as Tungche and Kwangsu, who have been virtually nothing better than prisoners in the Forbidden City, an independent opinion formed on personal observation is out of the question. To an enormous degree, therefore, the ruler must submit to be guided by his councillors. These he can change at will, other things being equal; but in the palace intrigues at Peking other things very seldom are equal, and the disgrace of ministers is as often brought about on account of their fidelity to the State as for any other reason. It is scarcely correct, therefore, to speak of the Chinese government as being despotically centralized. It may be so in theory; but a widely different state of thing prevails in fact. Local self-government is the keynote of Chinese administration. We have already seen to what an immense extent the affairs of each little community are managed by itself. The family autocrat acts in the first place as the regulator of his own domestic circle, where he adjusts disputes

which would otherwise be carried to the public tribunals, and metes out punishment to those who have committed wrong. The power he exercises in this respect is so far-reaching, that mandarins who have escaped censure for their public acts are often brought before the family tribunal and made to suffer for their crimes.

Then there are the village communities to be reckoned with. The mayor, as was mentioned before, is elected by popular franchise, and being in touch with the mandarins possesses an important voice in local affairs. He presides over a council composed of the most influential men in the district, to whom are entrusted a number of important functions, the nature of which amply indicates the large measure of self-government which is enjoyed by the Chinese people. These councils are responsible for the payment of the local taxes, which they have to collect and transmit to the provincial authorities. They must provide an efficient police force, and are held accountable for its proper supervision. It is also a part of their duty to attend to the various needs of the locality, such as the repairing of roads and bridges, or the erection of public buildings. Nobody can accuse the councils of overzeal as far as this portion of their duties is concerned. The roads have suffered such shameful neglect for generations, that they have almost entirely disappeared; and travellers' accounts as to the state of the bridges in some places are not much more encouraging. But there are wheels within wheels in the Chinese administrative system, as elsewhere; and it is official peculation, much more than local negligence, which is chiefly to blame for this state of affairs.

As the mandarins are continually being shifted about from one province to another, and do not hold their appointments to one particular district for more than three years, it naturally follows that the local councils are an important factor in the administrative machinery. They possess the knowledge of local affairs which is withheld from the public functionaries by the kaleidoscopic methods of the present government; and consequently

they are indispensable to the mandarins, who make use of them as consultative committees in the discharge of their duties. The great object of local administration is to avoid scandal and disturbance. Happy is the district, say the Chinese, which has no history. Consequently the magistrates are only too glad to leave the care of local interests in the hands of those who are best able to preserve order.

Before entering upon a detailed account of the system of provincial government, it would be as well to give some description of the central political organization at Peking. It has already been stated that the emperor receives the immediate assistance of two councils of state. These bodies are respectively called the Chunchi Chu, or grand council of state, and the Nui Ko, or grand secretariat. Under the Ming dynasty this latter department was the supreme council of the empire; but in the reign of Yung Ching, who succeeded the great Manchu ruler Kanghi, it was superseded in importance by the grand council of state. The offices of the grand secretaries are, nevertheless, the most coveted posts in the administration, and confer the highest rank which it is possible to attain; but the functions attached to them are purely nominal. In the Chunchi Chu, on the other hand, we recognize a body which is somewhat analogous to the cabinets of Europe. The number of its members, who consist of ministers holding high offices in the administration, has for many years been limited to four or five; though during the pressure and anxiety caused by the war with Japan it was found expedient to raise it to seven. At four o'clock every morning these privy councillors attend at the palace to transact the public business in the presence of the emperor. This occupies about two hours, during which time all matters of importance are discussed, and state papers requiring imperial sanction submitted to the emperor for signature. These are subsequently forwarded to the various departments of the government in order that the imperial instructions may be acted upon. Minutes of these state councils are afterwards

written up, and preserved in the department of the archives, which is attached to the grand secretariat. Much of what takes place at the deliberations of the grand council is officially published in the *Peking Gazette*, which is issued daily and distributed throughout the empire. This journal, which is read by most educated persons who take any interest in public affairs, partakes less of the character of a newspaper than that of a Chinese blue book, in which all matters connected with the administration are formally announced to the public, and supplemented by a more or less fabulous chronicle of events.

By far the most interesting department of the central government is, to the European, the Tsungli Yamên, or Board of Foreign Affairs. Compared with the rest of the administrative machinery the Tsungli Yamên is a bran-new office, the creation of yesterday; and for that reason, perhaps, coupled with the fact that it only deals with the contemptible affairs of the foreign barbarian, the Chinese have always looked down upon it with disdain. The department was created in 1861, after peace had been concluded with the allied forces, in response to the demand of the victors that proper diplomatic relations should forthwith be established between China and the West. The first members of this newly constituted body were the late Prince Kung, to whom the credit of its invention is due; Kuei Liang, one of the grand secretaries; and Wên Hsiang, an extremely able vice-president of the Board of War; but the number was brought up by repeated additions to eleven, which is its normal strength at the present moment. The members of the grand council are generally also members of the Tsungli Yamên, and the two bodies are in close touch with each other. In spite, however, of the distinguished ministers who sat on this committee of foreign affairs, its existence was not recognized by the official "Red Book" until 1890, thirty years after it had been established as a department of the administration.

Whatever expectations had been formed by foreign diplomatists, as to the results to be obtained from what they hoped

would prove a new order of things, were doomed to disappointment. The Yamên was composed of officials who, with rare exceptions, were utterly ignorant of affairs outside their own country. It soon became evident to the European representatives that the institution of the Board was a mere blind and sham, designed—if for anything at all—for their special torture. Not only was it practically impossible to discuss matters with people who had not the slightest conception of Western politics and principles or Western modes of thought, but it was equally clear that the members of the Yamên were merely playing a game of procrastination and bluff. To demands for compensation for murdered missionaries or travellers, they replied by pleasant remarks about the weather or the state of the crops; and when an ambassador threatened an ultimatum, they blandly handed him a dish of sweetmeats, or pressed upon his notice a particularly objectionable native *bonne bouche.*

An amusing account of a specimen interview with the members of the Tsungli Yamên was contributed to the *Times* in 1884. After describing the preliminary fuss and ceremony of handing round the usual refreshments, designed for the special purpose of wasting time, the correspondent continues:—*

> At last, when the melon-seeds and sugar-plums have been distributed in saucers all over the only table on which the foreigner would have liked to spread his papers, business is supposed to commence, half an hour having been happily consumed in arranging sweetmeats. "And now," observes the visitor, "what is your answer about the robbery of merchandise belonging to Mr Smith at Nam-kwei, and the beating of his servants for refusing to pay the illegal extortions of the officials?" One of their rules is that no one shall speak first. So they take sidelong glances at each other and keep silence until one, bolder than the rest, opens his mouth, as much to the surprise as relief of his comrades, who watch the reckless man in the hope that he will drop something which may serve hereafter to put a sting into some surreptitious charge against him. What he does say is,

* The excerpt has been taken from Mr Colquhoun's "China in Transformation," where it is cited on p. 212.

"Take some of these walnuts, they come from the prefecture of Long-way, which was celebrated for the excellence of its fruit!" Then follows a discussion on the merits of walnuts, which is, however, not nearly such excellent fooling as Lord Granville's discourse on tea-roses to the gentleman who sought an interview on some important question connected with China, but it fulfils the same purpose. When they do speak, they all speak at once, and, like Mr Puff's friends, their unanimity is something wonderful, and their courage rises to heroism. What they do say, can of course be neither understood nor answered; so much the better, since time has been killed, with the arrow of controversy still in the quiver. The Foreign Minister's lips begin to grow pale, and other signs of exhaustion warn the courageous ones that it is time to shout louder if haply they may stun their auditor with their noise.

Subordinate to the councils of state are six executive departments charged with carrying out the more important details of the administration. Each department has two presidents, the one a Chinese and the other a Manchu; and four vice-presidents, two of whom are Manchu, and two Chinese. Attached to each of these offices is a supervisor, who is supposed to keep the presidents in order and to see that their duties are discharged in a satisfactory manner. This is in accordance with the long-established principle that independent criticism is a valuable incentive to good government; though as a matter of fact these posts are often left unfilled. The six Boards are sub-divided into numerous departments, each of which has its special function. There are in all of them a General Record and Registry Office; a Copyists' Department, which prepares the reports and statistical returns that are to be laid before the emperor; a Superintendency of employés; a Control Department (which is sadly needed in the Tsungli Yamên) for insuring the punctual dispatch of business; and an Office for filing correspondence. And this list by no means exhausts the number of minor offices and divisions amongst which the departmental work is distributed.

The first of the six principal administrative departments is the Board of Civil Office, which superintends all matters connected with the civil service. It exercises an immense patronage

being intrusted with the appointment and promotion of the public officials, who are supposed to be selected or rewarded solely according to merit—an admirable system which is principally confined to theory. To the people this office is of the first importance, because it is the authority to which they must appeal against acts of injustice or oppression on the part of the mandarins.

"One of the most troublesome duties connected with this office," writes Professor Douglas,* "is that of providing for the emergencies which constantly arise from the death of one or other of the parents of officials. On such occasions the law makes it imperative that the bereaved mandarin should retire from public life for three years, a period which, by a pious fiction, is reduced in practice to twenty-seven months. Even this shorter time, however, often proves to be highly inconvenient. A viceroy may be in the midst of a delicate negotiation, or a governor may be face to face with a rebellion in his province, but on the news reaching him of the death of either parent he is bound by all he holds sacred to lock up his seal of office, and to retire into private life, there, theoretically, to mourn for the loss which has overtaken him. In moments of supreme peril, however, the emperor uses his prerogative, which overrides aught else, and orders the officer to postpone his mourning to a more convenient season. This was done in the case of the viceroy Li Hung-chang, whose mother died during the war with France, and whose funeral even was unattended by her renowned son."

In addition to its obvious function of managing the exchequer, the Board of Revenue is charged with the duty of issuing the census returns. The accuracy with which it performs this task is exemplified by the fact that nobody seems able to guess, within fifty or a hundred millions, what the population of the Chinese Empire may actually be. It is distracting to the inquirer who wishes to inform himself on this point to find it stated in one text-book, culled from authoritative sources, that such-and-such a province has a large and flourishing population of so many millions; while another declares the same district to be sparsely populated, and positively asserts the number of inhabitants to be a third of the former estimate.

* "Society in China," p. 44.

According to Professor Douglas the Board only aims at obtaining round figures; and the method by which the census is taken fully bears out this statement, and affords a perfect explanation of the conflicting reports which take the place of exact figures. It appears that each householder is supposed to hang up outside his house a card on which he has inscribed the number of its inmates. When the census official comes round, he examines the card and notes down the information it contains. But if the owner of a house has neglected to hang one up, the official relies upon his imagination to supply the deficiency; and should he be richly endowed in this respect, the results may swell the sum of humanity to an indefinite extent.

There is so much bowing and scraping and other ceremonia in China, that it has been found necessary to establish a special department of the government for the purpose of prescribing minutely where it all has to begin and end. This want is supplied by the Board of Rites, to which is intrusted the duty of proclaiming to the people a kind of programme of deportment specially arranged for every public occasion. If a Chinese official calls upon another with the object of discussing some definite matter of business, almost the whole visit is taken up with the observance of the rules of etiquette, which are so strict that it is even prescribed under what circumstances a cup of tea must be declined, and upon what chair it is permissible for a visitor to sit down after he has coquetted about the room in an ecstasy of humility for the length of time ordained by the rites. To be appointed to this Board is, therefore, no sinecure; though a part of its functions have been absorbed by the Tsungli Yamên. Before the constitution of the latter, the relations of China with foreign nations were looked after by the Board of Rites, whose business it was to instruct the representatives of the inferior nations in the ceremonial proper to the occasion, and to see that they performed the three genuflexions and nine prostrations of the kotow with becoming self-abasement. In the good old days, before the establishment of a

Board of Bluff, an ambassador was always looked upon as a bearer of tribute. Even Lord Macartney's embassy, which was the despair of the Board of Rites, was preceded—unbeknown to the ambassador—by a banner explaining that the foreign barbarian had come to pay tribute to the Son of Heaven.

Any prestige which was once attaching to the Board of War has long since entirely evaporated. The uselessness and incapacity of this department were amply demonstrated in 1894, when it was suddenly discovered, to the astonishment of the Powers, that China possessed no military organization at all. It will not come as a surprising piece of intelligence to most people to learn that the Board of War is charged with the superintendence of the naval, as well as of the military, forces. The authorities at Peking thought fit, however, to establish a special Board of Admiralty in 1890; but after the destruction of the Chinese fleet in the war with Japan, it was at one time proposed to abolish the department, there being—as was naïvely remarked—no need for it under the circumstances.

The Board of Punishments and the Board of Works sufficiently express by their titles the purposes for which they are constituted. It is enough to mention that neither office appears to perform its duties. The Board of Punishments is supposed to act as a kind of court of criminal appeal, and to temper the decisions of harsh magistrates with mercy. All it really does is to keep large numbers of wretched victims languishing under the most barbarous conditions in prison, where many of them die of starvation or cruel treatment before they are brought to trial. Equally hypocritical is the Board of Works, which fills the pockets of its officials with illegal commissions and embezzled public money, while the buildings and communications of the whole empire are allowed to go to rack and ruin.

There are two important institutions which should receive notice in this place: namely, the Court of Censors and the Hanlin college. The heads of these institutions form, together

with the presidents and vice-presidents of the Boards, the central government at Peking. The official censors, whose functions have already been referred to, number in all fifty-six, and are distributed over the eighteen provinces in what are termed circuits, of which there are altogether fifteen. Four censors are attached to the Metropolitan circuit, and others are employed at the capital in the capacity of superintendents of police. The independence of these officials is sometimes remarkable, and they do not hesitate to reprimand the emperor himself if he flagrantly neglects his duty. The Hanlin college, although it partakes of the character of a university, fills in many ways the position of an education department. The public examinations are entirely under its control, and the system of higher education throughout the empire is naturally made to conform to the methods prescribed by the Hanlin authorities. The encouragement of education is the principal aim of the college; and it would be an excellent thing for this country if there existed here an organized body of men equally desirous of attaining that end, and with as much power to achieve their object.

CHAPTER XIV

A CORRUPT MANDARINATE

A System of Sham—The Power of the Viceroys—Administrative Divisions—Public Officials—An Admirable Theory of Government—Difference between Precept and Performance—Buying Appointments—An Army of Indigent Relatives—Complicity of the Central Government—Vast Number of Applicants for Office—Kaleidoscopic Policy of the Manchus the Chief Cause of Corruption—The Administration of the Mongolian Dependencies—Peculiar Constitution of Tibet—Methods of Squeeze outside China Proper.

IN China all government is admirable in theory, and it is only when one examines into the practical conduct of affairs that the whole system is perceived to be more or less of a sham. The mandarin is supposed to be a father who regards the people of his district with a kind of paternal affection, and who—more in sorrow than in anger—corrects their faults with parental chastisement. He is commonly spoken of as Fu Mu Kuan, or father and mother of the people; a designation which would serve to exhibit the powers of satirical humour possessed by the Chinese, were it not wholly due to custom. Before going, however, into the question of official corruption, which is of vital importance as being a key to the present state of affairs in the empire, we will first become acquainted with the system of provincial administration.

With the exception of Chihli and Szechuan, the affairs of which are administered solely by the viceroy, all the provinces have at their head a governor, who is immediately responsible to the Crown. But only in the case of three* out of the

* Namely, Shansi, Honan, and Shantung.

eighteen provinces does the governor stand alone as the supreme authority. In all other instances he has at his elbow a viceroy as his superior colleague; the latter generally attending to the administration of two provinces. There are eight viceroyalties divided amongst fifteen provinces; the viceroy in one case presiding over three provinces at the same time. An immense power is delegated to the viceroys. Within the limits of their sphere they are supreme, and can even raise armies or navies. All that is demanded of them is that the revenues shall be punctually collected and forwarded to Peking, and, above everything else, that the provinces under their control shall make as little history as possible. In fact, as Professor Douglas observes, the central government "considers that viceroy is most successful of whom it hears least." The functions of the governors are similar to those of their superior colleagues, except that they attend chiefly to civil business and leave military affairs to the viceroys. In estimating the importance of the latter, one must not overlook the fact that they cannot make themselves inconveniently powerful without incurring the danger of dismissal. The emperor preserves this safeguard, that he can deprive them of their offices at a moment's notice by the simple expedient of an edict. And, as readers of foreign intelligence are well aware, it is no uncommon thing to read of the degradation of a viceroy whose influence has become irksome to the central authorities. The fact that the entire blame is thrown upon a viceroy or governor for anything that goes wrong in the district under his control, whether it be the act of a subordinate or a defect in the administrative machinery, tends to make him particularly careful; and he is apt to come down heavily on an official who has risked his position by some malfeasance. It often happens that the situation can be saved by the instant dismissal of the offending mandarin; and the viceroy who has got into a scrape does not hesitate, rightly or wrongly, to offer up such a sacrifice with all possible speed. Viceroys are even

blamed for accidental visitations, such as floods, famines, and other misfortunes. On these occasions it is usual for them to sue for punishment; and they even go so far, sometimes, as to publish their contrition by placarding about an autographic account of their misdeeds.

For administrative purposes the provinces are divided into prefectures, departments, and districts; there are also larger areas called circuits, which generally include several prefectures and departments, and are placed under the control of a Taotai, or Intendant of Circuit. On an average each province contains about ten prefectures, or Fu, as they are termed by the Chinese: and the official who presides over the one in which the provincial capital is situated, is entitled the head prefect of the province. Under the prefect there are various sub-prefects who are specially appointed to look after particular functions, such as controlling coast or river defence, exercising jurisdiction in military matters, or keeping order amongst savage tribes and other unruly populations. The prefect, in his turn, is held responsible by the viceroy or governor for all that takes place within the limits of his sphere.

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There are two kinds of departments: those which are subordinate to and form part of a prefecture, and those which are independent and report direct to the provincia government.

The mandarins attached to the latter class naturally take precedence of those who are placed under a prefect. The smallest administrative area is the district, which is presided over by an official who is generally known to Europeans as the district magistrate, and who may be said to represent the unit of official government in China. There are, of course, a host of minor officials who act as assistants, secretaries, deputies, and so forth; besides whom, one may reckon the vast number of parasites, hangers-on, and middlemen formed by the numerous class of unemployed literati.

The administrative divisions of each province are placed under the supervision of two superior officers, who are the heads of the executive department and are directly responsible to the viceroy or governor. These commissioners respectively hold the titles of treasurer and judge. The first-named superintends the civil service of the province, while the other attends to legal business and is supposed to see that the criminal code is properly carried out by the magistrates. Another important functionary is the literary chancellor, who presides at the prefectural examinations, and confers the secondary degree which entitles candidates to go up to the capital for the final competition that takes place every three years. The four high officials who are next in rank to the governor form an executive committee which administers the affairs of the province.

This, in brief, is the system of government which is established throughout the eighteen provinces. There are minute regulations, laid down by the central authorities at Peking, for the guidance of the viceroys and governors, which prescribe exactly what is to be done under given circumstances; and censors are provided for each province to see that these general instructions are properly observed. But, as a matter of fact, the viceroys are not interfered with so long as they remit the taxes with regularity and avoid unpleasant prominence. Nobody can quarrel with the general system in theory. If it leaves a large margin of power to the viceregal autocrat, it also

provides wholesome checks: firstly, by the constitution of a censorate to remind the viceroy of his obligations whenever he shows a tendency to depart from the path of duty; and secondly, by the privilege which every subject enjoys of drawing attention to public abuses by memorializing the throne. It is doubtful, in fact, if a more perfect theory of government could be devised than that which has been invented by the sages and statesmen of ancient China. Nothing has been omitted for the maintenance of an absolute balance of the scales of justice. The administrative system is a long but simple chain, in which every link is fitted compactly in its place; and if the necessary motive power were there to revolve the wheel of government in the manner intended by its projectors, a more admirable piece of machinery could not be imagined.

Unfortunately, the motive power is not there. The theories, the beautiful precepts, the lofty sentiments, all remain as the originators of the scheme conceived them. But they mean nothing. The entire spirit of former generations seems to have passed away, and to have left in its place an empty shell, which preserves a kind of mockery of what it once really signified. The rites are scrupulously adhered to, and every outward observance respected, but with an undisguised artificiality which amounts to positive cynicism. The whole system of government has degenerated into a vast conspiracy to exploit and plunder the governed. Justice is a commodity to be bought or sold; and the mandarins wring out of industry and commerce, by improvised duties and other methods of squeeze, the uttermost farthing. When Mr Hosie was travelling in Yunnan he came across a consignment of red copper, which was being transported on the backs of nearly four hundred mules and ponies, from the mines at Tung-chuan Fu, close to the Yang-tse river, a long distance across a difficult country right down to the West river in the province of Kwangsi. The copper was on its way to the metropolis; yet it was apparently found cheaper to send it this roundabout journey, even with the added expense of an

overland caravan, than to submit to the extortions of the officials stationed at the barriers on the Yang-tse Kiang.

Bribery clogs the public service from start to finish. Even in the case of an honest candidate who is capable of passing all the examinations on his own merits, the chance of obtaining the employment for which he has qualified is largely increased by, if it is not chiefly dependent on, the transmission of a bribe to those by whom the patronage is exercised. For many poor students this would be impossible, were it not for the existence of people only too eager to advance to a promising candidate the necessary money at an exorbitant rate of interest. The sum borrowed in this manner enables the student to pursue his studies, and at the same time affords him the means of satisfying the rapacity of the authorities at headquarters. But the transaction brings a train of evils in its wake. When the successful candidate has at last succeeded in obtaining the desired appointment, he finds himself compelled to job his creditors into all kinds of inferior posts about his person; the result being that he enters upon his official duties hampered by a crowd of parasites and blackmailers, whose object is to settle down comfortably and fatten on what they can screw out of their victim's position.

There is a regulation which forbids the mandarins to employ any of their own relatives in the subordinate offices. But, if anything, this rule, which sounds so excellent in theory, aggravates the evil which it is intended to remedy. No more sacred obligation rests upon the individual in China than the care of his family, which includes all who are related to him by ties of blood. This is one of the maxims which, although very beautiful and ideal in conception, does not work well in this world of material interests. If a man grows rich in China through his own talents or industry, he finds himself compelled, instead of enjoying the fruits of his labour, to keep a number of lazy or thriftless relations in idleness and luxury simply on account of their kinship. It may be supposed that this custom does not act as an incentive to unwonted exertions on the part of the in-

dividual; but the evil is naturally most felt among the merchant and official classes, and scarcely affects the industrious and toiling millions whose untiring energy would scarcely be challenged by the most prejudiced opponent of Chinese institutions. The newly-appointed official finds that, besides satisfying the greed of his parasites, there is a hungry army of indigent relatives to

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be provided for. The mandarins are largely recruited from the masses of the population; it may therefore be taken for granted that the financial calls of this description represent a large sum of money.

On the other hand, the salaries paid to the officials are absolutely inadequate to the expenses of their position. Professor Douglas states that this fact is recognized by the central

government to the extent of their paying the mandarins, in addition to the authorized salary, an extra anti-extortion allowance. It would have been simpler, one would have thought, to increase the civil list; but the ways of China, as well as those of Providence, are often inscrutable. But even this generous addition does not bring the salary up to the required strength, and the inevitable result is that the deficiency has to be made good in other ways. This unhappy state of affairs has existed so long, that it has become amongst the people, who are the main sufferers, an accepted fact. It is, under present conditions, China's necessary evil; and as such it has come to be regarded. The arrangement is silently acquiesced in; and unless any gross act of extortion or injustice takes place, the people are contented to be plundered. Taxation, one must not forget, is exceptionally light in China; Simon computing that the total amount does not exceed half-a-crown per head of the population. No doubt the Chinese are the more inclined to accept the peculation of the mandarins in a philosophical spirit, as they recognize that by abolishing one kind of burden they would merely effect the substitution of another.

There is an important factor in this connection which must not be lost sight of. Graduates who have qualified for office are dispatched in large numbers to the provinces by the central government, because there are no vacancies for them at the capital. These unwelcome arrivals have to be provided for by the local administration. Places must be found for them in the inland customs' office, or elsewhere; and scanty remuneration drives them to all kinds of illegal extortion. The *Peking Gazette*, of 23rd September, 1880, published a report of the viceroy of Kwangsi and Kwangtung, in which he petitioned the authorities at Peking not to send him any more candidates for office, as he had absolutely no use for them. In Kwangtung, he declared, there were altogether only 414 appointments for officials of all grades, while in the salt department there was not room for more than 17; yet the central government

had already sent him 1820 applicants for posts in the administration, and 320 who sought places in the salt department. To support this vast influx of graduates seeking employment, sums are required greatly in excess of the amount allowed by the imperial exchequer. In this way, therefore, the Peking authorities force upon their viceroys and governors, with open eyes, malpractices which are strictly prohibited by the laws; and they even have the hardihood to punish with severity cases of illegal extortion that have become open scandals. Which is much on a par with the duelling regulations in German military circles, whereby an officer is sent to prison for accepting a challenge, but dismissed from his regiment if he refuses to fight.

A moderating influence might have been found in the natural ties by which mandarins are bound to localities in which they have been brought up, and where their affections might be expected to be centred; or at least in the prospect of passing their official years in some particular spot, and making it their adopted home. But the Manchu conquerors, recognizing the policy of appointing Chinese officials to administer the affairs of the provinces, and fearing at the same time that they might conspire together against the alien dynasty, adopted the expedient of continually shifting them about from place to place. When to these tactics one adds the facts which have been stated above, recollecting that this system has been pursued for more than two hundred years, the cause of China's corrupt government seems plain enough. Mandarins who are prohibited from holding appointments in their native province, and who never remain in the same place for a longer period than three years, have no inducement to attach themselves to, or become interested in, a locality where they are little better than mere passing tourists. No sentiment exists to deter them from robbing the inhabitants of each halting-place. To-morrow they will be off again, perhaps to the other end of the empire, where the anathemas of their victims will be unable to reach them; and the only check they need put upon their rapacity is in

being careful not to overstep the limits of popular patience. The Chinese are a peaceable and extraordinarily docile people; but when once their passions are let loose, they are capable of becoming the most terrible and vindictive mob of desperados on the face of the earth. And the mandarin who has overstepped the limits of their forbearance has little mercy to expect at their hands.

What has been said of the eighteen provinces applies equally to the administration of the Mongolian and Tibetan dependencies of the empire. The Mongolian tribes are divided into banners, and placed under the control of military governors, who are, for the most part, of Manchu extraction. In Chinese Turkestan the administration is modelled on the lines of the provincial governments of China Proper; there is a viceroy at the head of affairs, aided by the usual superior commissioners, and under him intendants of circuit, prefects, sub-prefects, and district magistrates; but the former system of military rule has not yet entirely disappeared. More interesting and curious is the constitution of Tibet, which is nominally governed by the two sacred Lamas, the Dalai Lama at Lhassa, and the Panshen Lama, who resides at a city called the Mountain of Blessings and whose functions are more spiritual than those of his colleague. In the eighteenth century Tibet became a dependency of the Chinese Empire, and a new administration was substituted for the hierarchy by the Manchu emperors. As stated above, the Lamas remain nominally at the head of the State; but the government is really carried on by a council of four Tibetan ministers acting under the instructions of an imperial resident furnished by the authorities at Peking. The authority of this Chinese official, who is usually a Manchu and is associated with a colleague (called assistant resident) of the same nationality, is rendered more considerable by the periodical and prolonged minorities of the Lamas, who are supposed, when they die, to be instantly reincarnated in the bodies of new-born infants. Upon the death of a Lama, therefore, all the babies born immediately

after his decease are promptly inspected; and the one which gives a supposed sign that it is the person sought—a crow of delight or the stretching out of its arms to the Lama-hunter is considered to be a sufficient indication of divine inspiration—is installed as successor.

All these dependencies are under the control of a special department of the central government at Peking, which is entitled the Mongolian Superintendency, or Colonial Office. A particular form of peculation is practised by the mandarins who are appointed to posts outside the eighteen provinces. The salaries paid to them are in many cases absurdly low; but the paternal government has opened up an avenue of wealth, by conferring upon them the privilege of levying the means of transport for the long journeys which they have to take in connection with their official duties. This foresight on the part of the Peking authorities enables the mandarins to rob the people within their jurisdiction to their heart's content, by demanding horses, camels, or whatever else may be handy, vastly in excess of their actual requirements. The surplus animals are sold, and the proceeds may be supposed to yield a handsome profit to the speculators. Another fruitful source of gain, according to Professor Douglas, is the system of issuing passports to Chinamen who cross the frontiers. These only hold good for forty days, and if the time be exceeded a fine is inflicted, "the amount of which depends mainly on the will and pleasure of the mandarin who issued the passport." The Chinese are very ingenious at arranging delays, and it is not improbable that in the hands of an expert manipulator this practice is made to yield a handsome revenue.

It will thus be seen that the question of administrative reform is a very pressing one, and that it is useless to think about re-organizing the Chinese army, or otherwise attempting to bolster up the central government at Peking, before this system of extortion and injustice has been abolished by the constitution of a healthy and patriotic body of public officials.

CHAPTER XV

THE RELIGIOUS SIDE OF THE CHINESE

Religious Belief—Moral Characteristics of the People—Career of Confucius—His Royal Disciple and the Beautiful Singing Girls—His Teaching—Laotse the Virtual Founder of Taoism—The Mighty Atom—Confucius struck Dumb by Laotse—A Lugubrious Doctrine—Degeneration of Taoism into Charlatanism and Magic—Introduction of Buddhism—The Rascality of the Bonzes—Fundamental Adherence of the Chinese to the Ancient Religion and Rites of their Ancestors—Squabbles about Ancestral Worship—The Observance of the Rites.

In the matter of religious belief China is not so strikingly dissimilar to Europe as many people would have us suppose. There are a great many individuals in this part of the world who find it convenient to profess certain orthodox opinions, but who trouble themselves very little about theological matters in an active sense. It is thought respectable to wear the badge of a distinct creed; and there are consequently numbers of persons who would no more dare be without an accepted faith, than they would think of outraging society by omitting to leave cards or answer an invitation to dinner. The Chinese are just as conventional. There are scores of millions of Buddhists amongst them; but the belief lies no more than skin deep, and nobody could be more ready to laugh at the superstitions and absurdities connected with it than the Chinese themselves. The priests are a discredited class; the temples are neglected and allowed to fall into decay; but is it right on that account to charge the Chinese with being absolutely deficient in all religious feeling, to denounce them wholesale as atheists, and

to picture them as being steeped in materialism? In spite of the corruption of the upper classes in China, the masses of the population possess moral standards and act up to precepts of universal brotherhood. They are far more civilized than the lower classes of Western countries; and poverty has not had the brutalizing and degrading effect upon them which unfortunately has been the case with us. Can it be supposed that this has come to pass without the aid of a powerful moral evolution?

There are three religious or ethical systems which dominate the bulk of the Chinese people: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The most remarkable thing about them is the entire absence of sect hatred. This fact must be difficult for a European to grasp, when it is considered that opposing views about the root or derivation of a word will cause permanent and embittered schisms in the West even amongst members of the same church. Many people—especially missionaries—have construed this anomaly into clear evidence of the utter indifference of the Chinese to religious matters; but it cannot be denied that they cling persistently to something which involves a code of morality, and one might argue that no religion, properly so-called, could do more for them. Mr Little, after stating that the religion of the Chinese consists in propitiating evil spirits, goes on to say:*

> Their own system of ethics, based upon filial piety and custom, works well; and endeavours to upset it produce at first much harm, whatever the ultimate good. With all their faults—say radical defects—they possess many virtues. They are easy-going, kindly disposed towards one another, clannish in supporting their relations, hospitable, attached to their employers, and public-spirited, where their feelings are aroused, to a degree unknown in Europe.

The teaching of Confucius, who has chiefly been the means of bringing about the qualities which are most to be admired in the people of China, is a simple code of moral philosophy. In

* "Through the Yang-tse Gorges," 3rd ed., p. 145.

one fundamental principle there is a remarkable resemblance between the ancient sage of the Chinese and our own practical philosopher, the late Mr Bradlaugh: both men started from the point of view that it would be more useful to do something concrete for God's poor on earth, than to spend one's time in idle speculations about the immortality of the soul; and each acted up to his standard. Confucius—or Kung Fu-tse, as the Chinese call him—was born in the province of Shantung 551 years before Christ. He was therefore contemporary with Pythagoras, and some years anterior to Socrates. At the age of three he lost his father, who had been governor of one of the smaller cities; but his education was carefully attended to by his mother, who survived her husband twenty-one years. On her death, Confucius, who was beginning to distinguish himself in the public service, resigned his post in conformity with the usual custom, and retired for three years to mourn her loss in seclusion. During this period of retirement he gave himself up to the study of Chinese antiquity, and began to project a scheme for the general reformation of his country. He attempted to carry this into effect by travelling about the petty, and almost independent, kingdoms which then formed China, attaching himself to first one and then another of the ruling princes, and endeavouring to persuade them to substitute peaceful methods and moral suasion for the perpetual jealousies and wars which characterized the times.

The various courts which were visited by Confucius during his wanderings generally received him with open arms; but although the authorities lent a willing ear to his counsels, they seldom followed advice which was distasteful to them. The duke of Lu, however, was so delighted with his teachings that he appointed him to a high post; and the influence exercised by Confucius was so great that he rapidly succeeded in knitting the whole State together in a universal brotherhood. This alarmed the neighbouring princes, who began to fear that the dukedom of Lu might become too powerful under the new

régime. They hit, therefore, upon the expedient of presenting a number of beautiful and accomplished singing girls to the duke by way of a little distraction. The plan succeeded admirably. After the advent of these charming strangers the gallant ruler was never to be found in the council chamber, and Confucius, disgusted at repeated failures to prove the delusion and snare of feminine society, gave it up at last as a bad job, and turned his back on Lu, which was his native place, with the intention of conferring his services upon somebody else. Having met, however, with a number of rebuffs, he applied himself to the task of proselytizing, and gathered about him a large number of disciples. These he organized into four classes, and instructed them in the arts of logic, government, and moral philosophy. Six hundred of these disciples were then sent by him into different parts of the empire, in order that they might instruct the mandarins and the people in the principles of morality and good government.

The last years of Confucius were spent at his birth-place; and there he was buried at the age of seventy-two. Those who had neglected him in his life-time now hastened to pay every homage to the illustrious dead; and to commemorate his good works temples and palaces were built in every province throughout the empire, bearing inscriptions such as: "To the Great Master," and "To him who taught Emperors and Kings." The teaching of Confucius aims at showing the individual how to educate himself to a perception of his duty on earth, and prescribes rules of conduct for the development of his higher moral faculties. He lays immense stress on the cultivation of filial piety, and countenances the performance of the ancestral rites as acts of filial veneration. One may say that Confucius has taken all that is best in ancient tradition, and has built upon this foundation a solid edifice of good manners and morality. This is in all probability the secret of the universal acceptance of his teaching. The Chinese love precedent and antiquity; their minds are saturated with ancient lore and

history. Instead of attempting to root out venerable customs and prejudices, Confucius grafted on to them the noble philosophy which has made his name endure for twenty-four centuries; and by this means he has obtained a strong and permanent hold over his followers.

Laotse, on the other hand, who was virtually the founder of Taoism, entirely eliminated all reference to the past in his philosophy. This sage, whose name is not so familiar in Europe as that of his illustrious contemporary Confucius, is one of the greatest mysteries which the East has ever produced. His origin and his fate are absolute blanks in history. "As a meteor he flashed across the meridian of China, and then disappeared into darkness," observes Professor Douglas picturesquely. Laotse's philosophy is of the most abstract description, and might easily have served as a basis for German metaphysics. The greater part of his meteoric life was apparently spent in discussing the word Tao, to which he gave so many meanings that, if there were no limit placed on the inflections of the voice, it would make a very respectable and comprehensive language by itself. The ultimate conclusion to which Laotse came was that Tao was the mighty atom, or, as he termed it, the father and mother of the universe. It was doubtless the venerable philosopher's manipulation of the word Tao which sent Confucius, who had just paid a visit to him, into a fit of abstraction which lasted for three days. A disciple, astonished at this remarkable behaviour, inquired the cause.

"When," said Confucius, "I see a man make use of his thoughts to escape me, like a bird that flies away, I dispose mine like a bow armed with its arrows to pierce him, and I never fail to reach him and master him. When I see a man making use of his thoughts to escape me like an agile stag, I arrange mine like a running dog to pursue him, and I never fail to come up with him, and throw him down; when a man makes use of his thoughts to escape from me like a fish of the deep, I arrange mine like the hook of the fisherman, and I never fail to take him, and get him into my power. But as to the dragon who rises on the clouds and floats

in ether, I cannot pursue him. I have seen Laotse, and he is like the dragon. At his voice my mouth remained wide open; my tongue came out of it with astonishment, and I had not the power to draw it back; my soul was plunged into perplexity, and has not been able to recover its previous calmness." *

The demand which Taoism made upon its disciples was that they should strive after self-emptiness; which appears to have involved the leading of an extremely lazy but pious life.

"Tao was the negation of effort," says Professor Douglas.† "It was inactive, and yet left nothing undone. It was formless, and yet the cause of form. It was still and void. It changed not, and yet it circulated everywhere. It was impalpable and invisible. It was the origin of heaven and earth, and it was the mother of all things."

As propounded by Laotse, it does not appear to have been a very cheerful doctrine at its best; therefore it is a matter of small surprise that the mysterious disappearance of the philosopher, who is supposed to have journeyed westward in search of new proselytes, was the signal for the complete collapse of his moral system. The versatile Tao was very quickly transformed into all kinds of conjuring tricks. For a long time it figured as an elixir of life, and under this guise attained a great popularity. The Taoists degenerated into a sect of charlatans and professors of magic; their cult became demonology, and they enriched themselves by preying on the gullibility of the superstitious. In consequence, Taoism has fallen into disrepute; it is despised by the more educated classes in China, and is now only practised by the lower orders.

The introduction of Buddhism into China took place in the first century of the Christian era. Confucius had often been heard to say that the saint would make his appearance beyond the western frontier, and the emperor Mingti, reminded of this fact by a dream, sent envoys into India to make inquiries.

* M. Huc, "The Chinese Empire," vol. ii., p. 184.

† "Society in China," p. 404.

They brought back with them the teachings of Buddha, whose name was changed by the Chinese to that of Fo; and the new religion rapidly gained ground. The divinity of Fo was conclusively proved by the fact that his mother, during the period before his birth, was perpetually dreaming that she had swallowed an elephant. The result of these dreams was, as might have been expected, a remarkably fine boy; who turned out to be unusually precocious, for, immediately after his first appearance, he took seven steps forward, and exclaimed: "In heaven and on earth I alone am worthy to be adored!"

A PRIEST

The bonzes or priests of Buddha are for the most part the greatest rascals in China. They were recruited in the first instance from the criminal classes; a number of malefactors being taken out of jail for the express purpose of being drafted into the priesthood. The mode of perpetuating the latter is scarcely more promising. Foundlings are adopted at the age of seven or eight and brought regularly up to the business, which consists chiefly in tricking money out of the peasants. Le Compte relates how two bonzes, perceiving a couple of fat ducks in a farmyard, burst out into lamentations. The farmer's wife, hearing them weep, came out and inquired the reason of their grief. "We know," they said, "that the souls of our fathers have passed into the bodies of these creatures, and the fear we are under that you should kill them will certainly make us die with grief." The good woman was so much affected by their filial piety, that she faithfully promised to take care of

the ducks and to refrain from selling them. This was not exactly what the bonzes were driving at, and they suggested that her husband might not be quite so charitably inclined as herself. The upshot of it all was, that after much shedding of tears the birds were handed over to them for safe keeping; and the same evening the two bonzes, with their fellow priests, sat down to an excellent supper of roast duck.

The Chinese are remarkably free from bigotry; and although when their religions and philosophies were first taking root there was the usual amount of quarrelling and strife, the unanimity of to-day is so complete that Taoist and Buddhist priests are able to share a temple in perfect harmony. This excessive religious toleration has been taken to indicate an utter indifference on the part of the Chinese to all matters connected with their spiritual welfare. There is, however, another point of view which seems to offer a more satisfactory solution, and one which is in better accordance with the universal instincts of humanity. In judging of these questions, one must recollect the immense antiquity of the faiths and moral codes which have been enumerated as dominating the society of China. Confucianism and Taoism have been established for twenty-four centuries; and as the former was based upon the teachings of the most ancient philosophers, whose writings were collected by Confucius and simply given out again in an altered form, the traditions of three thousand years before Christ may be said to have been transmitted to posterity through this system of ethics. To these traditions the Chinese have remained faithful. One man may call himself a Buddhist, another may profess Taoism or be a follower of Confucius; but all sacrifice to Shangti,* the Supreme Lord of Heaven, and perform with untiring devotion the ancestral rites. It is not therefore so much that the people are incapable of attaching themselves with ardour to the particular sect to which they nominally belong, but that they cling pertinaciously to the

* On the authority of Professor Max Müller and the late Professor Legge, Shangti has been rendered in English as "God."

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ancient religion which formed the creed of their forefathers in remote antiquity. This would explain the apparent indifference of the Chinese towards the nominal creeds of their country, and intelligibly account for the absence of any real sectarianism amongst them. Though why missionaries should be shocked, and their religious principles violated, by the contemplation of Chinese sects living in peace and harmony with each other, it is difficult to understand. Are altercations and recriminations to be considered the only signs of the true spirit of religion ?

For two hundred years people have incessantly squabbled about the signification of the ancestral cult. Some have maintained that the Chinese actually worship the ghosts of their forefathers, and that the kotow before an ancestral tablet is an act of idolatry. Others, on the contrary, have asserted that there is no more idolatry in bowing to the shade of a great-grandfather or burning a paper coat to hide his nakedness in the next world, than there is in the Christian custom of placing flowers on a grave, or hanging up a photograph of the departed on the wall of your chamber. It is interesting, and perhaps not altogether uninstructive, to note that the latter view is shared by the cultured Chinese. When Archdeacon Moule explained to a mandarin the missionaries' objection to the ancestral rites, the mandarin replied: "Sir, you are mistaken. Ancestral worship is not idolatrous. It has not the high significance which you imagine. It implies merely a reverential and affectionate rite in memory of the departed, whom we desire to serve in their absence as though they were still present with us."

It requires the subtlety of a theological mind to discover an act of idolatry in the simple manner in which the Chinese honour the memory of their ancestors. In every house there is a shrine on which the ancestral tablets are deposited. When a man dies, an important part of the funeral is the ceremony of fixing up his memorial tablet. The genuflexions which are performed by the eldest son on this occasion are no more than

those which respect would have demanded of him during his father's lifetime. There are two regular festivals every year, in the spring and autumn, when the whole family is reunited in order to revere the memory of the dead of former generations. These periodical family gatherings go a long way towards promoting that good fellowship between relations, which is for the most part represented in this country by occasional quarrels at funerals, baptisms, and weddings between estranged uncles and cousins. It is difficult, therefore, to understand on what ground the majority of missionaries—there are, happily, enlightened exceptions—objects to the ancestral cult; and it is certainly a fact that every impartial authority who has expressed an opinion on the subject, asserts positively that so long as the apostles of Christianity insist on their proselytes abandoning this harmless act of reverence they will make no headway among the Chinese.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MISSIONARY TROUBLE

Missionaries mainly responsible for Anti-Foreign Feeling—Their Introduction effected by Fraud—Tactless Attitude towards Native Customs—Chinese Experience of Nations professing Christianity—The Political Interference of the Missionaries—Libellous Cartoons of the Literati—Popular Superstitions—Outrage on National Conventions—The Tientsin Massacre—Complicity of the Authorities—The Outrages on the Yang-tse in 1891—Evidence of their being the Work of one Individual—Chinese Masses scarcely to blame—Culpability of the Literati—Tit-for-tat—The Crux of the Difficulty.

A BURNING question, and one which causes as much anxiety to the Treaty Powers as to the Chinese government, is the conduct of missionary enterprise in the Middle Kingdom. The missionaries who are "subject to a Master higher than any statesman or diplomatist of this world," have established themselves in China and carry on their propaganda with an almost reckless disregard of international consequences. It is impossible not to pay a tribute of admiration to men who unselfishly risk their lives for the sake of obtaining converts to their faith; and nowhere have so much courage and devotion been displayed as by the missionaries in China. But with their lives they risk the cause of civilization; and the fact cannot be overlooked that the manner in which the missionaries have been smuggled into the country against the will of the people, and the injudicious methods by which they have sought to establish their religion, are mainly responsible for the anti-foreign feeling which is so subversive of our interests in the Far East.

The presence of the missionaries in the interior of China is due to a trick which reflects little credit on its perpetrator; and although the latter was not an Englishman, we cannot deny having availed ourselves of the opportunity to profit by a dishonest action. Before the capture of Peking by the allied forces in 1860, treaties were in force by which English and French missionaries were guaranteed the protection of the Chinese government when travelling in the interior, and their right to acquire land for building purposes at the treaty ports fully recognized; but no mention was made of any privilege of residence in the interior. There was, it is true, a loosely-worded clause in the Tientsin treaty of 1858, which afforded quibblers a loophole for the setting up of pretentious claims; but the British government adhered to Lord Elgin's intention, when using the phrase "at the ports or at other places," of applying the words solely to the outlying districts of the treaty ports, where it might be convenient to acquire concessions for the establishment of foreign settlements. After the burning of the Summer Palace the treaty of 1858 was ratified, and supplemented by additional articles. It was on this occasion that a French missionary, who had been deputed to act as interpreter, introduced into the Chinese text a clause of his own, which ran as follows: "It is, in addition, permitted to French missionaries to rent and purchase land in all the provinces, and to erect buildings thereon at pleasure."

This bare-faced forgery was not discovered by the Chinese until it was practically too late to utter an effective protest. It is stated by Lord Curzon * that "the British government professed its readiness to retire from a position which had no solid or legitimate foundation"; but the fact remains that when the French insisted upon the rights they had acquired by fraud, we quietly participated in their privileges, as we were politically entitled to do by the favoured nation clause. The consequence

* "Problems of the Far East," p. 295.

of this is, that the foreign missions of late years have practically been forced upon the Chinese at the point of the bayonet; and their continued presence in the interior is a perpetual reminder to the natives of the humiliations inflicted on the Son of Heaven by the foreign barbarians at Peking.

But if the mode of their introduction was offensive to the Chinese, the missionaries' tactless attitude towards the cherished institutions of China exasperated the natives to the last degree. It was demanded of every convert that he should absolutely renounce the ancestral cult. To a Chinaman this meant not only breaking away from an ingrained and most deeply honoured custom, but actually involved excommunication from the family circle and the destruction of every tie which connected him with those he loved. The whole of Chinese morality is bound up with this strange and mysterious homage which it is the filial duty of every man to pay to his forefathers. Once destroy the cult, and the whole structure upon which Chinese society rests would be pulled down, leaving the masses of the population in a state of moral anarchy. Apparently the missionaries are quite contented to pull down anything for the sake of obtaining a few proselytes; and as it has been said that the labours of statesmen are chiefly directed towards undoing the mischief created by philanthropists, it may also be repeated that a great amount of diplomatic effort in China, which might be more usefully employed, is wasted in a vain attempt to counteract the political harm done by these misguided enthusiasts.

In examining the causes of Chinese hostility to the presence of foreign missionaries, it may readily be surmised, to begin with, that a civilized community, possessing a splendid literature and a highly developed social and political organization, should view with the utmost resentment the establishment in their country of alien societies with the avowed object of upsetting their most cherished institutions, and of introducing a strange religion. One must also recollect that the relations the Chinese

have had with the nations professing this religion can scarcely have convinced them of the desirability of the new doctrine. Commercial greed and a constant readiness to appeal to physical force are the principal characteristics which have been displayed—in the eyes, at least, of the Chinese—by the men of the West. We talk in this country of imperial interests, of the expansion of our commerce, and of the maintenance of our rights; but one is sometimes apt to forget that these high-sounding phrases are expressed in less exalted language by people who are differently affected by the acts they imply. The Chinese have hitherto judged us by our actions; and they cannot forget that the presence of the foreigner in their country is the result of violence, and has been brought about by the repeated humiliation of their emperors. They see in our persistent efforts to gain a commercial footing in China nothing but the lust of gold, and a determination to exploit the resources of the country for no one's benefit but our own. We know that they are in one sense mistaken. Our merchants naturally wish to open up trade for their own benefit; but they are well aware that they can only create a profitable market for their goods in China by increasing the wealth, or purchasing power, of the native consumer. We cannot quarrel with the Chinese, however, for viewing our intentions as purely one-sided and selfish; for we have given them little cause to think otherwise.

The Chinese were spoken of in the previous chapter as being extremely tolerant in religious matters. It must therefore be thoroughly understood that the objections of the central government to the Christian propaganda are based wholly upon political grounds, and touch no question of doctrine. There are some missionaries who, taking the noblest and highest view of their calling, cast off all claims of nationality and, voluntarily placing themselves at the mercy of the people for whose spiritual welfare they are ready to sacrifice life itself, refuse to appeal to their governments for protection in the hour of danger. But there are others—amongst whom are doubtless those whose zeal

is satisfied with laying bibles on the seashore—who are only too ready to invoke the aid of a gunboat on the slightest pretext. These appeals have to be responded to; and consequently the Chinese government remains under a perpetual threat of armed foreign intervention. Besides this, must be reckoned the great influence which the missionaries obtain over their converts. The former are regarded in a great measure as the emissaries of foreign governments, and any political influence which they may acquire is therefore regarded with the greatest suspicion and dislike by the Chinese authorities. When it is seen that the principal object of the missionaries is to root out the most ancient and revered national customs, these feelings are naturally intensified. The foreigners, themselves, are in many cases foolish enough to interfere with the public functionaries on behalf of Christian converts who have been brought before the tribunals. It often happens, for instance, that a Chinaman who has adopted the new faith and has consequently been compelled to break with the family community, becomes involved in a dispute as to his share of the inheritance, which he naturally wishes to take with him. The disputants will perhaps bring the matter before a magistrate; and the missionary, actuated no doubt by the best of motives, and merely wishing to see fair play, puts in his oar on behalf of his protégé. It is unnecessary to point out the consequences of such an act, or to dilate on the impolicy and tactlessness—to use no stronger term—of interfering with the course of justice—or injustice—in a foreign country; particularly, one might add, in a country which guards the integrity of its institutions with such jealous pride as China.

These political reasons are not the cause of the popular antagonism to the missionaries. The literati, who represent the ultra-conservative element in Chinese society, have always been implacably opposed to Christianity, partly on account of the ill-advised campaign against the ancestral cult, and partly because the new faith is the means of introducing the hated foreigner into the Middle Kingdom. It has been their constant

aim, therefore, to inoculate the people with a superstitious belief that the missionaries commit the most abominable atrocities and practise all kinds of immorality. They are encouraged by the neutrality, if not by the secret approval, of the authorities, who always manage, when outrages have been perpetrated on foreigners, to avoid punishing those who were the real instigators of the explosion. The literati disseminate these calumnies by means of placards which abound in the most horrible blasphemies and libels. The Christian religion is characterized as hog worship; an idea suggested to them by a play upon the words Tien Chu, which the Roman Catholics use to designate God, but which is unfortunately analogous in sound to a term which implies "the celestial pig." Missionaries are represented as gouging out the eyes of children or corpses, for the supposed purpose of utilizing them for medicinal purposes; or they are depicted in the act of vivisecting Chinese victims in order to obtain parts of the body which are stated to be common elements of the European pharmacopœia. In other pictures insinuations are made of the grossest immorality.

These slanders are old enough; but they serve the purpose of the literati whenever there is an anti-foreign riot to be provoked. After the Yang-tse outrages in 1891, the Taotai of Wuhu reported officially to the authorities at Peking that charges had been made against the missionaries of stealing the eyes of sick people; that he had investigated the truth of the allegations, and had discovered in the crypt of the church several corpses in which the eyes were missing. This fact is narrated by Herr von Brandt * in his essay on Lord Curzon's "Problems of the Far East"; and the late German ambassador at Peking adds that during the negotiations with the Tsungli Yamên which took place at that period, he could not disabuse his mind of the impression that several members of that enlightened Board were by no means convinced of the unfounded nature of the Taotai's

* "Ostasiatische Fragen," p. 167.

accusation. To this day the Chinese believe that children's eyeballs are extracted for the purpose of sensitizing photographic plates. A lady who has lived for many years in the interior of China recently asked her Chinese servant, who had been in her service for a long time, if he actually believed that his kind-hearted master and mistress—who were much addicted to photography—were so wicked as to use children's eyes in the preparation of their chemicals; and he was unable to deny that such was his inner conviction. It would have been thought impossible to give colour to such baseless charges; but as a matter of fact an important rite of the Roman Catholic religion has certainly provided the Chinese with some cause for suspicion. When, namely, the last sacrament is administered to a dying convert, the relatives are banished from the room. Those who have had the curiosity to peep surreptitiously into the room have seen the priests bending mysteriously over the sick man; and this fact, coupled with the European custom of closing the eyes of the dead, has undoubtedly helped to bear out the libellous imputations of the literati.

It would doubtless be better if more circumspection were practised by the missionaries in matters such as these; but one cannot blame them for failing to cope with the irrational, though often excusable, superstitions of the Chinese. It is, however, another thing altogether when they wilfully outrage the proprieties which are ingrained in the social life of China. That would be excessively injudicious, and very bad taste, in the ordinary travelling layman; but in a missionary, whose first object should be to observe the customs and respect the prejudices of the people amongst whom he has taken up his residence, it is inexcusable. All these absurd charges of immorality could never have been formulated, had not the mission societies of England, America, Sweden, and Denmark sent out large numbers of young women to China as missionaries. These poor girls know nothing of the manners and customs of the country to which they are transported. They arrive, full of

zeal and enthusiasm, eager for the work of converting the heathen, and are dispatched to the interior in batches of ten or twelve, clad in Chinese dress and under the escort of a man. No proceeding could be more calculated to shock the modesty and violate the traditional usages of the natives. It would be most improper for a wife to gad about openly with her husband in a country where it is even considered indecorous for two intimate friends to mention in conversation the mere existence of a female relation. In the opinion of the Chinese the proper place for woman is the domestic hearth, and no good is likely to come of taking her out of her sphere; a lesson which the men of the West are learning by bitter experience. But for unmarried girls to travel round with a man is an outrage to morality. Such highly indecent conduct can have, they think, but one meaning; and they do not need the cartoons of the literati to point it out to them. Their own nunneries and monasteries have for the most part an evil reputation; and on that account they are the more predisposed to believe no better of the Christian missions, where unmarried people of both sexes are permitted to live under one roof.

By the spreading of these calumnies—some of which are not wholly unjustifiable if the prejudices of the Chinese be taken into consideration—the people have from time to time been egged on to the commission of such outrages as the Tientsin massacre of 1870. The authorities had every warning on that occasion of the gathering storm. Rumours of an intended attack upon the missions were in circulation for a considerable time before the event actually took place; placards were posted up, not only in Tientsin, but in various other places as well, containing the usual accusations against the missionaries and openly threatening them with violence; but notwithstanding these facts, and in spite of the representations made to them by foreigners, the Chinese authorities remained supine and made no effort to prevent the outbreak. In the massacre which followed, twenty-one foreigners, besides a number of native

converts, were barbarously murdered. Subsequent investigations proved that the outrage was arranged and carried out by organized bodies who must have acted with the connivance of the local authorities. The members of the fire brigades—which, as already stated, are under the orders of the merchants' guilds —took a prominent part in the massacre. They were aided by bands of desperados known as the Hunsing Tzê, and by soldiers and yamên followers who were led to the attack by a Titu or major-general. In spite of foreign protest the implicated mandarins were permitted to remain in office for three weeks after the outrage; and the common people, seeing no punishment inflicted on them, were naturally led to suppose that the act had been approved by the authorities at Peking. At last, after protracted negotiations, the Chinese government consented to mete out justice to the guilty parties. Sixteen murderers were executed, afterwards receiving a state funeral, while their families were handsomely provided for by the government; an imperial edict was issued, in which the massacre was strongly condemned; and, finally, two principal mandarins were degraded from their posts, being ostensibly banished to Manchuria, but in reality permitted to return to their own homes. The major-general, who was the principal offender, was allowed to go scot free.

The series of outrages which occurred in the Yang-tse valley in 1891 was in point of cause and effect a mere repetition, though of a fortunately milder character, of the Tientsin massacre. Riots broke out at nearly a dozen different places along the banks of the river; but only at Wuhsueh did any loss of life occur. The usual sequence of events precipitated the general catastrophe. The impetus to the movement came from the province of Hunan, which is the centre of conservatism in China, and contains to the present day the most violently anti-foreign population in the empire. By means of inflammatory placards and cartoons of the grossest and most offensive description, the passions of the people were excited against the

Christian missions. The first outbreak occurred at Wuhu, which is situated about fifty miles above Nanking on the Yang-tse river. Trumped-up charges of kidnapping children were made, and an infuriated mob broke into the mission-house and set fire to the building. The arrival of some Chinese gunboats, which were escorting a high official to his post up the river, fortunately put an end to the rioting before further mischief was done. Nanking was the next scene of attack. The missionaries, warned beforehand by the authorities, were able to send their wives and children to a place of safety in time to avoid the explosion which followed, resulting, as in the former case, in the total destruction of their property. At Wuhsueh nearly all the missionaries were temporarily absent, leaving only one of their number and an English customs' officer to protect the women and children. When the riot broke out these two men hurried to the rescue of the latter; but they were unhappily murdered while bravely attempting to make their way to the mission-house. Mr Gundry gives a graphic account* of the incidents which followed the attack on the foreign buildings; but it is only fair to remark, in the first place, that the babies came safely out of the affray; and secondly, that, although the ladies appear to have been subjected to rough handling on the part of the mob, there were amongst the Chinese individuals who did their best to protect the foreigners from violence.

Later investigations by the British minister at Peking revealed the fact that the Yang-tse outrages were the work of a retired official, named Chow Han, living in the province of Hunan. Evidence of this was furnished to the Tsungli Yamên; but the commission appointed by the Board to inquire into the matter reported that the accused man was a harmless lunatic, and no steps were taken to deprive him of his liberty. The only official who was punished in connection with the riots of 1891

* "China Present and Past," p. 213, *et seq.*

was a mandarin, who had attempted to save the lives of the two Englishmen that were murdered at Wuhsueh, and who had been severely injured in consequence. The British government insisted afterwards upon his being reinstated in office; but this action could have only temporarily postponed the ruin of an individual who had made himself objectionable to the authorities at Peking.

People who from time to time read in the newspapers of these attacks upon missionaries, and who have not had leisure or opportunity to examine into their origin, are apt to cast the blame wholesale upon the Chinese populace, and to regard the outrages as evidence of their brutality and lack of civilization. The missionary question is one which requires a volume to be thoroughly treated in all its aspects; and little more can be attempted within the limits of a single chapter than to indicate a few of its more important phases. But it is to be hoped that the faint sketch which has been given of the causes of Chinese hostility to foreign missions, will at least have contained a clue to the real aspect of the case. The reader will have observed that in the commission of these acts of violence the masses of the people are mere tools in the hands of the literary classes. Superstitious to the last degree, this phase of the national character has been utilized by the literati as the foundation of a deep feeling of hatred and fear of foreigners. It was found easy to fill the credulous minds of the common people with all kinds of absurd notions respecting the practices and evil designs of the missionaries. These stories about kidnapping and mutilation have been in circulation, it must be remembered, for many generations. The Chinese are as much brought up to believe in them, as our children are inoculated with conventional views about all the common objects of their surroundings. And their adherence to these fantastic ideas is fostered by observing the missionaries in the daily commission of acts which, in the eyes of Chinamen, are heinous offences against decorum. The fire is therefore always smouldering; and it only needs the hand of

the agitator to kindle it into flame. The outrages which are then perpetrated under these influences can only seem human and natural in the eyes of impartial-minded people, when it is recollected that the Chinese mob implicitly believes that it is a question of exterminating diabolical and inhuman monsters who are guilty of the most appalling crimes which devilish ingenuity could possibly devise.

The guilt therefore falls upon the heads of those members of society who have been the direct means of deceiving the ignorant and superstitious, and who have wilfully incited them to outrage and violence. But can we altogether blame the literati for their action? They might urge with an undeniable amount of truth that the means they employ to get rid of the missionaries merely involve an act of retaliation. Foreign intercourse has been thrust upon them by force of arms; and by the same violent methods they seek to rid themselves of the strangers who have come to interfere with their institutions and to upset their political economy. This is merely, of course, a moral side of the question. The Chinese government has chosen—or, one should rather say, has been compelled—to enter into treaties by which the lives and property of foreigners have been guaranteed its protection. Treaties must be respected; and although, as before stated, the right of residence in the interior was procured for the missionaries by fraud, the Chinese authorities have nevertheless officially recognized that clause of the Tientsin treaty, and it is therefore the duty of the foreign ministers at Peking to see that its provisions are carried out and respected.

But the legal aspect of the case must not blind one to its real merits. The presence of missionaries in China, however laudable and high their purpose may be, is—under present conditions, at least—a standing obstacle to a better understanding with Western nations. As long as they insist on maintaining an offensive crusade against the ancestral cult, which is the very backbone of Chinese civilization, the natives

will remain implacably opposed to the presence of the foreigner. It is not for a layman to decide whether the ancestral rites be idolatrous or not; but when one remembers the constant disputes of the missionaries themselves on this point, and the fact that many of the most enlightened amongst them (such as, for instance, the Rev. A. P. Martin, D.D., who is president of the Tung-wên college at Peking) have been able to see nothing objectionable in this Chinese custom, the conclusion can hardly be avoided that it would be quite possible to inculcate the doctrines of Christianity without violating the national cult. If the ancestral rites necessarily implied a disbelief in a future state, one could more readily understand the attitude taken up by the majority of the missionaries. But it must be patent to everybody that such is the reverse of the case. One might go further, and suggest that people who have been taught a higher reverence for the common relationships of the material world, would be the better predisposed to entertain a lofty conception of a Heavenly Father. But to whatever conclusion one should be led on that point, it is abundantly clear that by maintaining their present attitude of uncompromising hostility to Chinese institutions, the missionaries will only succeed in permanently defeating their own ends.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CHINESE ARMY

Organization of Manchu and Chinese Troops—General Gordon on Chinese Tactics—China's Immunity from Wars—Consequent Loss of Warlike Spirit—Military Text-Books—Quotations from the Wu Pei Chi—Sound Principles of Strategy—How to be Victorious—Failure to profit by Collision with Europeans—Individual Instances of Bravery—Futility of Li Hung-chang's Efforts to introduce Military Reform—Causes of Inefficiency—Inadequate Pay—Ridiculous Drill—A Grand Review—Wholesale Peculation—Warnings to the Imperial Government—Necessity of Drastic Reforms.

STATISTICIANS are quite as much at sea regarding the numerical strength of the Chinese army, as they are in regard to the population of the empire. The land forces are divided into two distinct armies. In the first place, there are the Manchu troops, or Eight Banners, which are stationed for the most part in Manchuria. A corps of specially picked men, about four thousand strong, forms the imperial guard in Peking; and Manchu garrisons are maintained throughout the eighteen provinces for the purpose of repressing any inclination on the part of the Chinese to conspiracy and rebellion. Nominally, the Eight Banners consist of from two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand men; but a third of that estimate more probably represents the actual force under arms. Secondly, there are the provincial troops, which are known as the Army of the Green Standard. Who can presume to number them in the face of the conflicting estimates, varying from three

hundred thousand to seven hundred thousand, which have from time to time been put forward by different authorities? These forces are little more than a kind of local gendarmerie, whose functions are limited to keeping the peace amongst the populations of the various provinces. When there is real business to be done, the "braves" are called out, and they form the miscellaneous rabble with which Europe has become familiar during the latter part of this century.

A SOLDIER

It is well known that the Chinese generals use military text-books, some of which were compiled centuries before the Christian era. Before laughing at the idea of such antiquated tactics being employed in modern warfare, it is as well to recall the advice tendered to the Chinese government in 1880 by the late General Gordon at the request of the authorities at Peking.

"He strongly advised them," says Lord Curzon,* "to give up playing the game of scientific warfare with foreigners, in which they were sure to be beaten, and to adhere to the traditional irregular warfare for which their aptitudes especially fitted them. Skirmishes as against battle, breech-loading rifles as against big guns, this was his motto of advice."

In the opinion of another distinguished British officer who has had great experience of the fighting capacity of the Chinese, the latter would have done far better in the Japanese war had they been armed with weapons which were familiar to them; instead of which, defective armaments of foreign manufacture,

* "Problems of the Far East," p. 330.

for the use of which the majority of them had received no sort of training, were thrust into their hands at the last moment.

In the early history of the Chinese race, military matters played the most important *rôle* amongst the affairs of state; and it was in those days of turbulence and conquest that China produced great captains who are worthy of being ranked with the Cæsars and Alexanders of the Western world. But by degrees, as the aboriginal tribes were driven into the mountains and the advancing tide of civilization spread over the conquered territories, the art of war became a secondary consideration; the vast masses of the people settled down to peaceful occupations, and the warlike spirit began to evaporate under the civilizing influences of industry and agriculture. At the beginning of the Christian era the art of war became one of the four principal branches of knowledge; and the lapse of three or four centuries sufficed for it to degenerate into a humbler position among the fourteen divisions of philosophy. For fifteen hundred years China has enjoyed a remarkable immunity from wars; a fact which she principally owes to her geographical position. There have been civil wars and rebellions from time to time, and for many centuries the Tartar tribes beyond the northern frontiers gave a good deal of trouble to the Chinese emperors. But the areas affected by these disturbances were, it must be remembered, considerably restricted; and although large districts have been devastated and depopulated on occasions, there has always been ample time for them to recover from the effects of the calamity.

The inevitable consequence of this long period of comparative tranquillity has been loss of warlike spirit, and the degradation in the eyes of the people of the profession of arms. The military mandarin of to-day stands on an inferior footing in relation to his colleagues of the civil service. He is regarded as a fighting machine, but not as an intelligent director of warfare. Tactical science is studied by the civil mandarins,

and it is chiefly they who are supposed to direct military operations in times of war. Everything, as the reader must have seen, is in China subordinated to literary accomplishments; and with the same fatuity which they extend to all civil functions, the Chinese believe that a thorough knowledge of the classics, coupled with a theoretical acquaintance with the military science of bygone ages, is the best guarantee of a general's capacity.

One may venture to predict that few tacticians of the most modern school would be disposed to quarrel with the excellent principles laid down in the Wu Pei Chi, which is the most celebrated and highly esteemed text-book of recent times. This is, of course, speaking comparatively. The Wu Pei Chi was written in 1621, and would be considered a little out of date in European countries; but one must recollect that the Sun-tse of the sixth century B.C. and the Wu-tse of the fourth century B.C. are, if anything, even greater authorities on military tactics than the more recently published Wu Pei Chi. A considerable portion of this latter work consists, in fact, of quotations from the ancient text-books; and no great deviation seems to have taken place from the principles laid down in them more than two thousand years ago. The second chapter of the Wu Pei Chi treats of the conduct of a campaign.*

When the army is in good condition, and there are abundance of munitions, provender, and money, the best thing for a general to do is to promptly take the offensive; in such a case attack and victory will be simultaneous. . . . It is the business of a commander to protect the property and the rights of his sovereign; conquest must be a secondary consideration It should be his chief aim to guard the towns and villages of his sovereign and allies against destruction; and only when he has taken measures for their security, may he turn his attention to plans for attacking the enemy. . . . If a general possesses more troops than his adversary, he should either surround him or institute an attack from

* The quotations which follow are translated from Herr von Brandt's German rendering of the original Chinese text contained in his interesting little work "Aus dem Lande des Zopfes."

different sides; but if he has fewer, it will be necessary for him to take up a position of natural security and to avoid an engagement. . . . There are five attributes which are indispensable to a good general. He must know when to give, and when to avoid, battle; he must understand how to utilize a numerical preponderance, and also in what way a disadvantage in numbers may be turned to account; he ought to be as friendly towards the common soldiers as he is with their officers; it is essential that he should weigh all contingencies in the balance, both the manifest and the unforeseen; and he must be sure of his sovereign's approval in all that he undertakes. If he is possessed of these qualities, he may always be certain of victory.

These principles are reprinted in the Wu Pei Chi from books more than two thousand years old, and the same antiquity may be ascribed to the following maxims of advice: "If you are the weaker, entrench yourself, let the enemy tire himself out in fruitless onslaughts, weaken him by well-timed sorties, and then hurl yourself on him. Keep your troops together, in order that they may support each other; should the enemy make the mistake of not keeping his troops together, hurl your full strength on his straggling divisions and attack them separately. That is the way to lead a small army to victory in the face of a superior force. Deceive the enemy as to the object of your attack; he will then divide his forces in order to be protected on all sides from assault, then bear down with your whole strength upon one point in his position. In this way you will score a primary success, and it is difficult to recover from the effects of a defeat. Calculate your movements so exactly that you will encounter and attack the enemy at a given moment; try to cut him off from his reserves, and to prevent one wing from coming to the help of the other. There are disadvantages in an army which is too large; a small, well-disciplined army under the command of a capable general is invincible, but the inferiority in numbers must be counterbalanced by superior strategy."

Enough has been quoted, perhaps, to show that the Chinese are by no means unacquainted with those fundamental

principles of practical warfare, without the aid of which—whether it be a question of manœuvring the modern machinery of war or of handling antiquated battalions of archers—no campaign can be successfully undertaken. But all the strategy in the world will not help bows and arrows to prevail against Maxim guns and repeating rifles. This is a lesson which the Chinese have learnt over and over again; but pride, official dishonesty, and obstinate conservatism have proved obstacles so vast that practically no headway has been made against them. Yet as early as 1841, when the first collision with a European Power occurred, the Chinese received ample proof of the incomparable superiority of Western military and naval organization. Numberless instances are on record of the magnificent bravery displayed by some of the Chinese and Manchu troops during the opium war at that period; and the English were lost in admiration at the indomitable pluck with which men, most of whom were absolutely new to modern engines of destruction, and who were receiving their first real baptism of fire, stood up with their antiquated and useless weapons against the leaden storm poured upon them by their antagonists. But in spite of these examples of heroism, no serious stand could be made against the Europeans. For the most part the soldiers were mere rabble, who broke away and ran for their lives as soon as the first shot had been fired; the arms and ammunition possessed by the Chinese were practically useless; and the coast fortifications were totally inefficient to resist the artillery which was brought to bear upon them.

Even the capture of Peking by the allied forces in 1860 failed to pierce the thick hide of official conceit and infatuation, although it was a repetition, with more pronounced results, of the many European lessons which had been inculcated on former occasions. The land forces of the Anglo-French expedition consisted of 11,000 men, and out of this total only eighteen were lost on the way to the capital. Some years later, when General Gordon crushed the Taiping rebellion with his

small but ever-victorious army, Li Hung-chang, at least, began to grasp the necessity of military reform. But subsequent events have shown how little could be accomplished even by China's greatest statesman against the prejudices and conservatism of the official class.

The chaos and disorganization of the Chinese army are accounted for by an array of more or less obvious defects in the entire military system. The sound principles contained in the military text-books have been alluded to for the mere purpose of showing that the Chinese science of war is not quite so contemptible as some critics would have us believe; but it is none the less plain that unless the most modern methods are adopted by the Chinese, they cannot hope to hold their own against Japan or the militant nations of the West. The revolution which such an attempt at military reform would entail will become self-evident when the causes of the present deplorable inefficiency are examined into. There is, in the first place, the inadequateness of the soldier's pay. We have already seen to what a gigantic system of fraud and peculation the short-sighted economy of the central government has led in the case of the civil officials; but there is no opportunity for the common soldier to supplement his pay by robbing other people. He is therefore obliged to resort to the expedient of earning wages at some sort of honest employment; and the natural consequence of this necessity is that, as no man can serve two masters, the military duties go to the wall. The Chinese army is really composed, therefore, of labourers and peasants who give their spare moments—if they have any—to military exercises. One of the consequences of this is that when a body of troops has to be moved from one place to another, there is an immense delay caused by the necessity of each soldier first going home to prepare his outfit and to arrange about the support of his family, or, it may be, to hire a substitute. In addition to this lack of adequate pay, must be taken into account the absence of any sort of reward or

pension for long service, and the fact that no provision or compensation is made for wounded soldiers or for the families of those who have lost their lives in the service of their country. A better class of soldier is attracted in times of war by the offer of higher pay, and the added prospect of plunder and prize-money.

A thorough drill is under these circumstances out of the question; and the exercises which are indulged in are better calculated to develop a body of muscular athletes than an army of trained soldiers. Playing catch with heavy stones; shooting arrows at straw dummies when at full gallop; marching on parade; blowing calls or signals; bawling words of command, are the chief items of drill in the Chinese army. There is little target-practice, because it is considered a waste of money to expend powder and shot in times of peace; and yet in the opinion of a late German instructor the Chinese are very promising shots, being phlegmatic and possessed of excellent sight. Proper military manœuvres do not take place, but there are occasional grand reviews in the provinces, when an imperial inspector of forces from Peking pays a visit of inspection. Huc gives an amusing account of a review which he

A MILITARY OUTPOST

witnessed in the province of Hupeh. The soldiers were armed with guns, bows, pikes, sabres, pitchforks, and saws fastened to the end of a long handle, as well as rattans, shields, and iron culverins; and every man carried, in addition, a fan and a pipe.

At one extremity of the field there was raised, on a slight elevation of the ground, a platform shaded by an immense red parasol and ornamented with banners, streamers, and some large lanterns that did not seem particularly necessary, as the sun was shining in full splendour; but perhaps they were intended to be symbolical, and to signify to the soldiers that they were in the presence of enlightened judges. The Inspector Extraordinary of the Imperial Army, and the principal civil and military mandarins of the town, were on the platform, seated in arm-chairs before little tables covered with tea-things and boxes filled with excellent tobacco. In one corner was a servant holding a lighted match, not, however, to fire cannon with, but to light pipes; and at various points of the field we saw formidable detached forts made of bamboo and painted paper. The moment arrived to begin. A little culverin that stood near the platform was fired off, the military judges covering their ears with their hands to protect them from the frightful detonation; then a yellow flag was hoisted to the top of one of the forts, the tam-tams sounded a furious charge, and the soldiers rushed together pell-mell, uttering terrible cries and grouping themselves round the flag of their company; then they seemed to be trying to get into some sort of order, in which they were not very successful, and after that they had a mimic fight, and the mêlée, which was certainly the most effective, soon followed. It is impossible to imagine anything more whimsical and comic than the evolutions of the Chinese soldiers; they advance, draw back, leap, pirouette, cut capers, crouch behind their shields, as if to watch the enemy, then jump up again, distribute blows right and left, and then run away with all their might, crying 'Victory! victory!'*

As the Chinese soldier is neither efficiently paid nor properly drilled, it is small wonder that an army in China is little more than a disorganized rabble. At the bottom of these abuses is the national curse of official corruption. The higher officers regard the military service as a remunerative speculation which offers an excellent opening for business. They maintain only a proportion of the prescribed number of soldiers, and pocket the balance of pay which has been granted for the full strength.

* "The Chinese Empire," vol. i., p. 400.

This is done with the knowledge and connivance of the highest officials, who participate in the fraud and share the plunder. Many of the men intended for military service are employed as farm labourers to raise crops for the support of the standing army; and by this means a further sum is saved which also finds its way into the pockets of the corrupt authorities. Not contented, however, with robbing the State of its proper complement of defenders, the peculation is carried to even more serious lengths than these. Large sums of money are granted by the exchequer for the purchase of modern munitions of war. The *modus operandi* here is to buy up quantities of old muzzle-loading guns, and to put them down in the bill as the latest-patterned rifles; in this way enormous sums are embezzled by the mandarins, and the army is provided with a lot of useless rubbish.

Li Hung-chang is not the only person in China who has attempted to bestir the imperial government to military reform. The authorities at Peking have been frequently warned by highly-placed officials and independent critics of the utter inefficiency of the present defensive organization. The *Peking Gazette* of 2nd October, 1885, published a memorial by the governor of Hunan, the most fossilized and conservative of the eighteen provinces, in which he urged upon the government the most sweeping changes. He expatiated on the uselessness of maintaining a large, but totally unserviceable army, which simply drained the resources of the country to no purpose; and in proof of his assertion he pointed out that at the time of the outbreak of the Taiping rebellion the rebels consisted of not more than two thousand men, whereas the standing army of the province of Kwangsi amounted to twenty-three thousand men, to which were to be added a local militia of fourteen thousand. And yet these forces, numbering altogether thirty-seven thousand men, were unable to cope with two thousand rebels! The same deplorable state of affairs existed, he declared, in the other provinces; and he then proceeded to

point out some of the abuses to which the military system gave rise.

The conclusions arrived at by the governor of Hunan are those which must occur to every person who has given his attention to the foregoing facts. Large bodies of untrained and incapable soldiers are nothing but a burden upon the community: a source of useless expense in times of peace, and of no value when war breaks out. It would be far better policy, therefore, to dismiss a portion of the men and reduce the number of officers, who are greatly in excess of what is needful. A higher rate of pay could then be instituted, and there would no longer be any necessity for soldiers of the Green Standard to labour for the support of themselves and their families. This initial reform would bring others in its wake; and under the new conditions a sterner discipline could be introduced, and a higher standard of efficiency insisted upon.

But these changes are clearly not enough. The governor of Hunan dared not go to the root of the evil and attack the whole system of administration. In cases such as this, reforms must begin from above. The common soldier is, after all, only the victim of a conspiracy on the part of his superiors to defraud the State to the utmost extent; and no satisfactory results can be achieved until the most drastic measures have been taken to insure honesty and public-spiritedness amongst the military and civil mandarins. The founding of a military school at Tientsin some years ago has not borne fruit. The high military officers, who simply regard their position as a means of personal enrichment, send their clerks and other subordinates instead of going there themselves; and the latter have found it more advantageous afterwards to obey the orders of their superiors, than to profit by what they had acquired from foreign instructors. The latter are entrusted with very little authority; and the consequence is that the results obtained by them are practically *nil*. This failure is of course trace-

able to the action of the Chinese themselves; and all European experts who have had opportunities of forming an opinion seem unanimous in agreeing that the material for a first-rate fighting force is there. The stumbling-block are the authorities at Peking; and one is led to suppose that the Manchus are afraid that an efficient Chinese army would be a constant danger to the present dynasty.

CHAPTER XVIII

EARLY INTERCOURSE WITH THE WEST

The First Records of Western Intercourse—Unfavourable Impressions caused by the Advent of Portuguese Adventurers—The Causes of Chinese Hostility—Jealous Refusal of Foreign Assistance against Manchu Invasion—High Prestige of Jesuit Missionaries—First Appearance of the English—Merchants discouraged by the Chinese—Shut up in the Foreign Factories—Spanish Massacre of Inoffensive Chinese—Causes of Mutual Friction—First Diplomatic Intercourse with Russia—Lord Macartney's Embassy—A Stone for Bread—Increasing Friction—Lord Amherst's Mission—Malicious Behaviour of the Duke Ho—A Significant Present.

THE history of Western intercourse with China before the sixteenth century, when the great civilized empire of the East was practically re-discovered by the Portuguese, is more or less a closed page. There are indisputable proofs of Christian communities having flourished there before the seventh century of our era, a monument having been discovered at Singan-fu, the former imperial capital, which contains an inscription to that effect. But beyond the settlement in China of these Nestorians, as they have since been ascertained to be, there was no direct contact with Western countries until Genghis Khan and his Mongolian hordes overran Eastern Europe and opened up intercommunication between Asia and the West. One of the first lay travellers in China was the celebrated Venetian, Marco Polo, who was so favourably received by Kublai Khan, the first of the Mongol rulers, that he took up his residence in the Middle Kingdom for nearly twenty years and even held for a short time the office of prefect in an important city. But when he

returned to Europe after this long absence, and published the book of travels which enjoys world-wide popularity to this day, his story obtained no credence. It was regarded as an imposture, and the truth of his assertions was only proved many generations later, when the sea route to China had been discovered, and commercial enterprise brought merchants and freebooters to the shores of the wealthy empire of the Far East.

Unfortunately, it was chiefly from the conduct of these early Portuguese adventurers that the Chinese derived their first impressions of European civilization. The first arrivals, it is true, made peaceable overtures to the natives, and there seemed every prospect of friendly trade relations being established between China and the West. But the news of the resources and wealth of the newly discovered market spread with great rapidity, and the adventurous spirit of the age sent privateers and marauding expeditions into the Far Eastern seas. A few years later Portugal sent an ambassador to Peking; but the Chinese, incensed at the violence which had been committed by his countrymen, sent him back to Canton, where he was first thrown into prison, and finally executed. In the meantime, as commerce does not stick at sentimental trifles, the merchants pushed steadily on, trying to extend their privileges in every direction. The Chinese authorities, on the other hand, did their utmost to restrict the operations of the foreigners to Canton. They were the more anxious to accomplish this limitation, as the European riff-raff, who had sailed in the wake of the commercial expeditions, were repeatedly forcing their way into the interior of the country and committing high-handed acts of piracy. By degrees, however, the Portuguese merchants settled themselves in Ningpo and Macao, besides occupying the Chusan islands.

It is extremely interesting and important to note the effects of this first real contact with a European nation, because it serves as a reflection in miniature of the entire later development of China's foreign relations, and largely indicates the

grounds upon which the Chinese have founded their hostility to the West. There is distinct proof that until excesses were committed by the Europeans the native authorities seemed willing to enter into commercial relations with foreign merchants. The latter were not to blame, in the first instance, for the change of feeling occasioned by the unprincipled behaviour of their piratical countrymen; though their subsequent conduct—marked on the one hand by insatiable greed, and on the other by a contemptible servility towards the native officials—encouraged the Chinese to treat foreigners with a not altogether undeserved disdain. Happily for the continued existence of foreign trade, it afforded the local mandarins unrivalled opportunities for robbery and peculation; and to that circumstance one must ascribe the fact that the Portuguese were not driven out of the country on account of their misdeeds.

Always anxious to ingratiate themselves with the authorities, the Portuguese offered, at a moment when the government were hard pressed by the Manchu invaders, to come to their assistance with a corps of arquebusiers, supplemented by trained natives. The corps was actually sent across country to Peking; but no use was made of the proffered help. Official jealousy, which found its outward expression in the statement that the Portuguese troops formed too small a body to be of any use against the Tartar soldiery, would not brook their employment. They were sent back to Macao; but the Chinese borrowed their cannon, which they utilized as pattern guns for a number cast by them under the directions of the Jesuits.

At the time of the Manchu rebellion the Jesuit missionaries had established themselves in China for nearly half a century, and were in high favour at court. Their attitude towards Chinese institutions was such as might have been expected from an enlightened order of Catholic fathers. To the ancestral rites they offered no objection, being only careful to look upon their performance as an act of filial duty entirely devoid

of any religious significance. So long as this attitude was maintained, the Jesuits were welcomed on account of their scientific attainments, which were of the greatest benefit to the Chinese. The change of dynasty made no difference to their position, and the emperor Kanghi twice issued edicts in favour of the Christian religion. But after Kanghi's death persecutions broke out, which ended in the ultimate withdrawal of the Jesuits from Peking at the beginning of this century. The cause of this sudden break-up was the same as that which has already been described as lying at the root of Chinese hostility to the Christian missions of to-day. The Pope chose to regard the veneration of ancestors as an idolatrous practice, and it was his active interference with the wiser and more tolerant views of the Jesuits which precipitated the crisis, and at one stroke undid all the work that had been accomplished by the most capable emissaries of civilization who have ever entered the Middle Kingdom. It will thus be seen that there was, for a time at least, a counterbalancing influence at Peking. But, unfortunately for the progress of foreign intercourse, religious hairsplitting put a speedy end to the most promising relations which have been entered into between China and a European country; and since the blow dealt by Papal interference, missionary enterprise, far from being a means of drawing the East and West together in closer relationship, has been one of the principal means of keeping them asunder.

The English introduced themselves to the Chinese, if with better intention, at least in quite as unfortunate a manner as their Portuguese predecessors. In 1635 Captain Weddell appeared at Macao, in command of a few ships, with an introduction to the Portuguese governor. It may naturally be supposed that this latter circumstance was a bad recommendation to the Chinese, and when the British vessels sailed up the mouth of the Canton river they were fired upon by the Bogue forts. Thereupon, the English commander returned

the fire, and ultimately captured the forts. In every respect, therefore, this pioneer expedition was a complete failure; its only result was the inscription of England's name in the black books of the Canton authorities. For the following thirty years no further enterprise was initiated from this country. In 1664, however, after the completion of the Manchu conquest, a British expedition visited Amoy and brought back a small quantity of Fukien tea. From that time it was sought to establish trade relations between China and this country; but the desire was entirely one-sided, and the Chinese resorted to every expedient they could devise for the discouragement of British and other foreign merchants. The latter were, to all practical purposes, shut up as prisoners in the foreign factories at Canton.

They had imposed upon them eight regulations, framed by the mandarins for their conduct, one of which strictly prohibited the introduction into the factory of European women, guns, spears, or any arms, and another of which forbade them to row on the river, or to take any exercise for pleasure outside the factory grounds. Neither were these rules allowed to be treated as dead letters. On the slightest infraction of them the trade was stopped, and sufficient pressure was brought to bear to compel compliance.*

An important factor in the foreign situation must not be overlooked. While the Portuguese were beginning to establish themselves on the mainland of China in the sixteenth century, a Spanish expedition took forcible possession of the Philippine islands, which for a long period had been in close commercial touch with the Cantonese merchants. A considerable expansion of trade resulted from the occupation of the Spaniards, and Chinese settlers were attracted in such numbers that within a few decades they outnumbered the Europeans in the proportion of twenty-five to one. It was undoubtedly to the presence of this source of cheap labour that Manilla's growing prosperity was mainly due; but the Spaniards could only see

* Professor Douglas, "Society in China," p. 235.

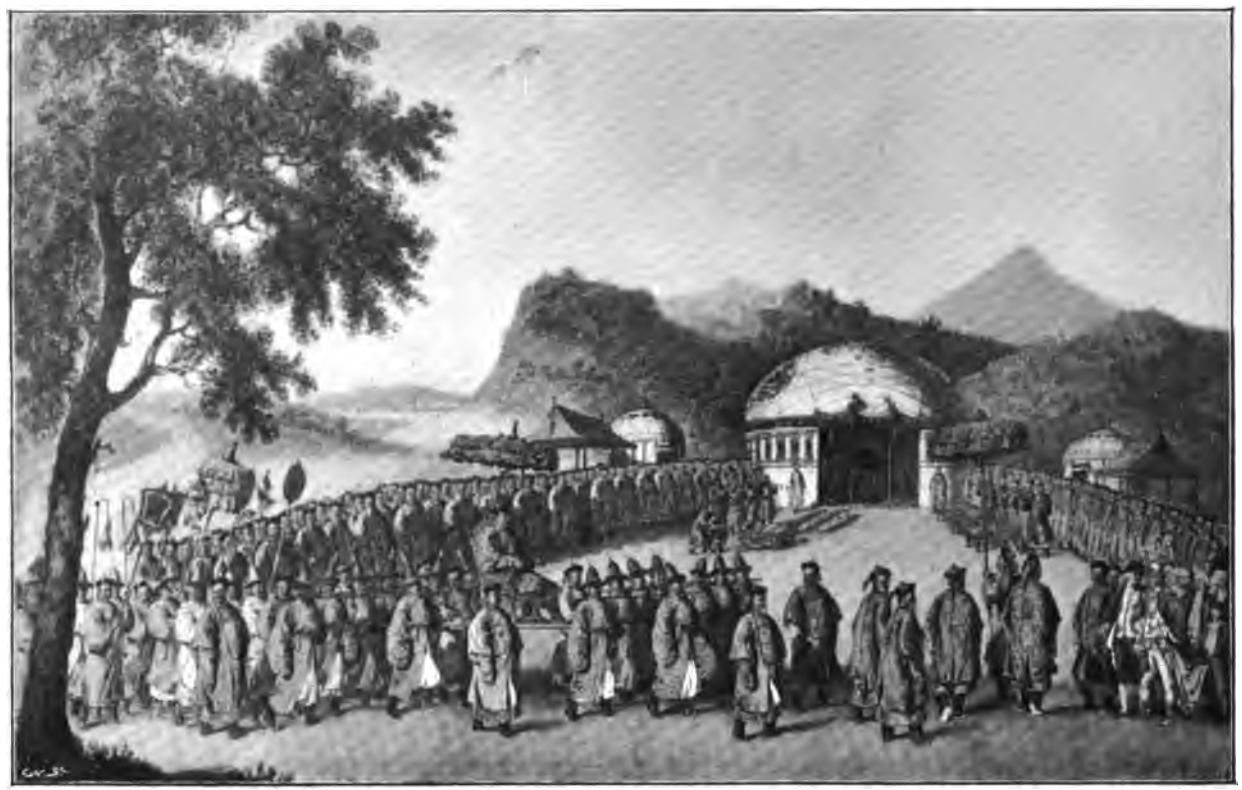
in this rapid increase of Chinese immigrants a formidable danger to their own existence. They therefore adopted the brutal tactics which were pursued by their countrymen in Peru and Mexico, and massacred the greater part of the defenceless and innocent Chinese. This abominable outrage did not appear to exercise any deterrent effect upon the continued immigration from China, and it was not long before the Spaniards were confronted with a similar situation, to which they gave the same solution as before. The Chinese only encourage migration when it is a question of inducing the inhabitants of an over-populated district to settle in a neighbouring province which has been devastated by war or some other cause; but it is not regarded as a respectable thing for people to leave their country for the purpose of adopting another. In this circumstance one must seek for an explanation of the fact that the Chinese authorities did not bestir themselves to avenge the cold-blooded massacre of those who had voluntarily expatriated themselves; but it must not be supposed on that account that they were not impressed by the barbarous conduct of the men of the West.

Rapine, murder, and a constant appeal to physical force, chiefly characterized the commencement of Europe's commercial intercourse with China. On the other hand, it must be admitted in justice to those who—like Captain Weddell—visited the sea-board with peaceable intentions, that the presumptuous conceit and intolerant attitude of the native officials in a great measure excused the reprisals to which the foreigners were goaded. At the same time one must not lose sight of the fact that the initial reception of the first Portuguese arrivals was marked by cordiality and good understanding; and it was not until they had fully earned the title, that the Europeans acquired the disagreeable appellation of "foreign devils." In the eyes of the Chinese the goal at which all Western barbarians aimed was war and robbery; and the idea was strengthened by the behaviour of the Dutch, whose first appearance at Macao,

shortly after the Portuguese had settled themselves there, was the signal for a scrimmage between the two European Powers, prompted by the rapacity of the former and the determination of the latter to warn all new-comers off their preserves. Finally, the Dutch obtained a concession to found a colony in the island of Formosa; and to their presence was attributed, during the reign of Kanghi, the local insurrection against Chinese authority. The charge was unjustly made; but it serves to show the kind of impression which Western enterprise had not unnaturally made upon the government of China.

It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that diplomatic relations were entered into between the Russians and the Chinese. There were two abortive missions sent by the former during the latter half of the preceding century, audience being refused to them as the envoys refused to perform the kotow, a ceremony which consists in kneeling thrice and knocking the forehead in the dust nine times. The ambassador sent by Peter the Great in 1719 was, however, more complaisant. By order of the emperor Kanghi, one of the Chinese ministers kotowed before the Tsar's letter, and M. Ismaloff then offered no further opposition to the performance of the same prostrations in the imperial presence. But notwithstanding the flattering reception which was accorded to the Russian envoy, and in spite of the permission which was obtained by him to leave his secretary, De Lange, as diplomatic agent at the court of Peking, no advantages accrued from the embassy. On hearing the glowing accounts of his envoy, Peter dispatched a caravan to open up trade relations with Northern China; but when it arrived in 1721 it met with a hostile reception, and De Lange, who on account of the emperor's illness was exposed to the hostility of the mandarins, was shortly afterwards expelled from the capital, and it was intimated to him that in future all trade intercourse would be restricted to the frontiers.

The first British embassy was sent to Peking in 1792. There



RECEPTION OF LORD MACARTNEY BY THE EMPEROR

were many circumstances which made it desirable that a representative of British interests should visit the capital. Our trade had developed to a considerable extent; but the grievances and disabilities of the English merchants were constantly increasing, and they were practically at open war with the authorities at Canton. Envoys from other nations had been sent to Peking, and it was felt that the British, who were near neighbours of China in the East, ought to have a representative at the Chinese court. An able ambassador was accordingly dispatched in the person of Lord Macartney, who met with a courteous reception on the part of the mandarins and was conducted to Peking in state, unaware of the fact that he was preceded by banners proclaiming him to be a tribute-bearer from England. Here a wrangle occurred as to the ceremonies that were to be observed on the introduction of the embassy to the emperor. At first Lord Macartney flatly refused to kotow; but he afterwards offered to do so, on condition that a high official of the Chinese government should make the same obeisance before a picture of George III. The emperor Kien Lung happened to be absent at Jehol beyond the Great Wall, and the quarrel about etiquette was haply interrupted by the arrival of an imperial message inviting the ambassador to join the court. As soon as Lord Macartney had accomplished this journey the subject of the kotow was revived; but the British plenipotentiary remained obdurate, and in the end he was permitted to an audience on the understanding that he should pay the same respectful salutations to the emperor that he would to his own sovereign.

The audience took place at sunrise in the gardens of the imperial residence. The aged monarch was carried in his palanquin by sixteen bearers to his tent of imperial yellow. There he mounted a throne, and Lord Macartney, conducted to the steps by the master of the ceremonies, knelt upon one knee and presented to the emperor a casket set with diamonds containing a letter from the king of England. When the royal

presents had been tendered, the British envoy received in return the gift of a stone sceptre, which may be said to constitute all that he succeeded in getting out of his mission. From a practical point of view the latter was a dead failure. Lord Macartney had been sent to Peking for the purpose of obtaining some concessions as to the conduct of foreign trade which would make the position of the merchants more bearable. But although his embassy was received with the utmost civility and treated with every consideration, he was sent back empty-handed, save for a stone sceptre in lieu of the bread for which he had undertaken the costly and tedious enterprise.

Kien Lung's reply to George III. really amounted to a snub. He refused to extend the privileges of the British merchants to any other port beside Canton; he rejected the proposal that an English diplomatic representative should reside permanently at Peking; and he warned the king that unless he complied with the celestial regulations his ships would be driven away from the coast altogether. "Let us therefore live in peace and friendship," he concluded, "and do not make light of my words." One point, however, was conceded by the emperor which showed a real disposition to ameliorate the condition of the foreign community at Canton. The viceroy of Kwangtung was superseded by a prince of the imperial blood, who was stated to be inspired with the kindliest feelings towards foreigners; and this beneficial change of government was brought about before Lord Macartney had taken his departure.

The hopes kindled by this new aspect of affairs proved to be more or less delusive. It is true that the newly-appointed viceroy exhibited on several occasions his goodwill towards the English; but the increased importation of Indian opium against the wishes of the authorities created a great deal of irritation, which was largely augmented by an unfortunate affair in 1800, when a Chinese was fired on and wounded by a British sailor. A letter from the emperor Kiaking in 1806 to the king of England, which described the English as "beholding from afar

the glory of our empire and respectfully admiring the perfection of our government," may be taken as a sample of the attitude towards Europeans persisted in by the Chinese authorities. And when a British squadron occupied Macao two years later, in order to save it from falling into the hands of the French, the English were told to repent and immediately withdraw; a request which they meekly obeyed from motives of erroneous diplomacy. The effect of this blundering retreat was an assumption on the part of the Chinese that they had beaten the English; and to commemorate the incident a monument was erected at Canton. After this, things went from bad to worse. The emperor Kiaking was known to be bitterly hostile to the obnoxious foreigners, and insults to and assaults upon the Europeans became of frequent occurrence. In 1815 strong representations were made to the British government as to the advisability of direct negotiations with Peking; and it was decided to send a second embassy to China.

Accordingly in the following year Lord Amherst arrived in the celestial empire, and was conveyed to the neighbourhood of the capital in barges which bore the announcement that he had come as a tribute-bearer to the Son of Heaven. The journey was characterized by interminable altercations as to the ceremonies to be observed on presentation. Lord Amherst, like his predecessor, refused to kotow unless the same number of prostrations were made by a Chinese of high rank before the picture of the English monarch. The duke Ho was sent to meet him half-way, and tried to overcome his scruples by the declaration that Lord Macartney had actually kotowed on the occasion of his audience. To this falsehood Lord Amherst replied that he had in his suite a gentleman who had been present at the ceremony in 1792, and that he was perfectly aware of what had taken place. On arriving at his destination, Lord Amherst was immediately sent for by the emperor. He was dusty from travelling, hungry, and ill with ague. It was impossible for him to enter the imperial presence in such a

condition, and he begged that the audience might be postponed until he had had time to rest and make himself presentable. The duke Ho thereupon seized him by the arm, and attempted to force him before the emperor; and when this plan failed, he went in himself and informed his sovereign that the European refused to obey his summons. The result was that Lord Amherst and his suite were unceremoniously bundled out of the palace, and compelled to leave without seeing the emperor at all.

The whole failure of the expedition must be attributed to the malice of the mandarins, and in particular to the duplicity of Ho Kung. It was undoubtedly his intention to fling the ambassador down before the emperor in an involuntary kotow, and subsequent events showed that Kiaking had been deceived as to the real circumstances of the case. Messengers were dispatched begging the ambassador to return to Peking. To this request Lord Amherst naturally demurred; but he forwarded to the emperor the royal presents that he had brought for him, and received in exchange the appropriate sceptre of stone which had symbolized the fruits of the former expedition.

CHAPTER XIX

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

A New Situation—Lord Napier's Appointment—The Opium Question—Real Motives of the Chinese Government—High-handed Proceedings of Commissioner Lin—Arrival of a British Force—Chinese Bluff—Annexation of Hong Kong—Operations on the Yang-tse—The Treaty of Nanking—Renewed Friction—The Affair at Fatshan—The "Arrow" Incident—Lord Elgin's Expedition—Capture of Canton—Threatened Advance on the Capital—The Treaty of Tientsin—Chinese Double-dealing—British Repulse at the Taku Forts—The Anglo-French Expedition—Treacherous Capture of Englishmen—The Burning of the Summer Palace—Treaty ratified—British Embassy established at Peking.

In spite of the disabilities under which the foreign trade was carried on at Canton, and notwithstanding the peculations of the mandarins, its proportions increased during the years which followed the failure of Lord Amherst's mission. But in 1834 an event occurred which completely changed the situation. At that date the East India company's monopoly of trade with China expired, and it was decided by the Home government that an official should be sent out to Canton to superintend the conduct of British trade. The appointment of Lord Napier to this post roused the Chinese authorities to the highest pitch of fury, which was not allayed by the conduct of the new superintendent. The East India company had always humoured the native officials in every possible way, and had been contented to put up with a great deal of humiliation for the sake of pecuniary gain. But Lord Napier, as the representative of his sovereign, took an altogether different tone. Instead of approaching the authorities in the orthodox manner by petition-

ing them through the hong merchants, he attempted to put himself in direct communication with the viceroy. The latter refused to hold any sort of intercourse with the "outer barbarian"; and the result of the British official's persistent efforts to gain his point was a total suspension of the foreign trade and an effectual boycott of the Europeans, who were shut up in the factories and deprived of their servants. Ill-health ultimately compelled Lord Napier to withdraw to Macao, where he died, it is stated, chiefly from vexation, and without having accomplished anything beyond the increased irritation of the Chinese.

It is not necessary to enter into the merits of the opium question, which was made the scapegoat of subsequent events. To institute a discussion as to the relative injuriousness or innocence of the drug, which is always tempting to the argumentative, would be to waste time over side issues. It is generally allowed that although the Chinese were sincere in their desire to get rid of the foreign trade, they merely pitched upon the opium traffic in particular because it afforded unrivalled opportunities for dialectic controversy. The question, therefore, is not so much whether we had a right to force a deleterious drug upon the Chinese against the wishes of their government, but rather if we were justified in compelling them to trade with us at all. There is a great deal to be said on both sides; but it is a point which may well be left for the individual to decide for himself. As to the fact that we did, inch by inch, force commercial relations upon a country which desired to remain closed to the outer world, there can be no doubt. An excuse is found in the suggestion that China will benefit quite as much as ourselves through being opened up to Western trade; but it can readily be understood that the official classes of that country think themselves competent to judge in the matter, and actively resent having the opinions of foreign nations, whom they cannot suspect of disinterestedness, imposed upon them in this fashion.

As regards the opium trade itself, one should remember that the English were not the means of introducing the drug into China. For centuries the Chinese had themselves cultivated the poppy, and Indian opium found a ready sale, not as a novelty, but on account of its being superior to the native-grown article. The Chinese government took up the question of opium importation when it was discovered that the country was being drained of silver to pay for it. A memorial to the throne in 1833 revealed the fact that nearly sixty million taels of silver had been sent out of the country within eleven years,* and it became evident that if this exportation of the precious metal were allowed to continue China would speedily be reduced to bankruptcy. This was the immediate cause of the decisive action which was taken in 1839; and although hostility was chiefly directed towards the opium traffic, it should be recollected that the latter constituted by far the most important branch of trade while offering at the same time a ready target to the opponents of foreign commerce, and that the economical objections which were held in regard to the importation of opium applied equally to trade in general with Western countries.

Commissioner Lin was sent to Canton for the avowed purpose of putting an end to the illicit trade in opium; but it is obvious that the object of his mission was to drive away the foreign merchants altogether. He proved to be a man of unbounded energy and resource. His first act was to demand the surrender within three days of all the opium stored by foreigners, and he issued a proclamation forbidding the Europeans to leave Canton until he had arranged matters to his satisfaction. A thousand chests were given up to be destroyed; but this did not satisfy the commissioner, who demanded of Captain Elliot, the official successor to Lord Napier, that the whole of the stores possessed by the foreign community should

* D. C. Boulger, "The History of China," vol. ii., p. 68.

be surrendered. The merchants at that moment appeared to be in imminent peril; they were shut up in their factories, surrounded by armed Chinese, and entirely cut off from possibility of protection. In these circumstances Captain Elliot called upon them to comply with Lin's request, and the result was that twenty thousand chests, valued at more than two millions sterling, were handed over to the authorities and destroyed. The commissioner did not, however, stop here. Other and more outrageous demands followed upon this wholesale confiscation of property, and it was threatened that, the sale of opium being a penal offence in China, sixteen Europeans who were accused of being implicated were liable to be executed in conformity with the laws of the country. It was clear that the lives of foreigners were no longer safe at Canton, and the majority of the merchants retreated to the Portuguese settlement at Macao. Foreign trade was virtually suspended, and the crisis entered upon its most acute phase.

The absence of a British warship had encouraged the Chinese to proceed to the most extreme lengths; but the arrival at this juncture of two British men-of-war put a different complexion upon the course of events. Hostile collision was inevitable, and the sinking of four junks in November, 1839, embittered the situation. Things had become intolerable; and the Chinese, who had no knowledge of the military and naval resources of the Power they were defying, issued an edict forbidding British subjects to remain upon Chinese territory. It was therefore resolved to give them a lesson; and a fleet, accompanied by transports with four thousand soldiers on board, arrived at the mouth of the Canton river in June of the following year. The futility of confining operations to the port of Canton soon became apparent, and it was decided to occupy Chusan as a base for more extended action. After this move the fleet sailed to the Pei Ho, where negotiations took place between Captain Elliot and Kishên, the governor of the metropolitan province, who persuaded the English officer that

matters could be more speedily adjusted if he returned to Canton. This turned out to be a mere ruse to get the barbarians away from the neighbourhood of Peking; and after endless procrastination, the British force once more took the offensive and captured the outer Bogue forts with considerable loss to the Chinese. The immediate result of this action was the annexation of Hong Kong, to which troops were immediately transferred from their quarters at Chusan.

With extraordinary fatuity, however, the emperor Taoukwang continued to issue instructions for the annihilation of the foreign barbarians; and as fast as one commissioner failed to carry out the imperial orders, he was recalled to be dealt with by the Board of Punishments and superseded by another. No reliance could therefore be placed upon the pledges of an official who would pay with his head for any concession granted to the foreigners. But with the advent of Sir Henry Pottinger, a distinguished Anglo-Indian officer, who was sent out as plenipotentiary a few months later, a more vigorous policy was adopted by the British. The scene of action was rapidly transferred to the region of the Yang-tse. Amoy, Chusan, and Chinhai were captured on the way; and having effectively occupied Ningpo, successful attacks were made on Shanghai and Chinkiang. But it was not until measures had been taken to bombard the ancient capital of Nanking, that the Chinese authorities were brought to their senses, and sent envoys to make terms with the enemy. A treaty of peace was signed, by which a war indemnity was to be paid, five treaty ports (including Canton) were to be opened to foreign trade, and the governments of Great Britain and China placed upon a footing of equality.

The defects of this convention soon became apparent. Its terms were far too general and indefinite to secure that the spirit of the agreement should be carried into effect. In any case there is no doubt, considering the temper of the Chinese government at that time, that no conditions, however explicitly

stated, would have been respected by the mandarins. But it is equally certain that if distinct provision had been made, firstly for the legalization or abolition of the opium trade, and secondly, for the establishment of a diplomatic representative at Peking, a great deal of valuable time would have been saved, and in all probability many hostile acts averted. It can hardly be supposed that the failure to include these crucial points was an oversight on the part of the British plenipotentiary; but it is equally difficult to surmise the grounds of their omission. The treaty of Nanking was formally ratified by Keying, the imperial commissioner appointed for the purpose of arranging the settlement of China's foreign relations, at Hong Kong, in July, 1843. Consuls were established at the treaty ports, and a commercial *modus vivendi* was drawn up on paper. But the grievances of the foreigners remained exactly the same as heretofore. Excuses were made for keeping the city gates of Canton closed against the barbarians; the mandarins refused to enter into official relations with the British authorities; and the policy was continued of inciting the Cantonese roughs to commit outrages on the hated Europeans. If anybody continued to harbour the least doubt as to the genuine and earnest desire of the Chinese government to get rid of all foreigners and close the Celestial Empire to the nations of the West, this persistently hostile attitude in the face of overwhelming force must have dispelled any lingering traces of it.

In 1847 an unfortunate affair occurred which served to bring about the crisis that had long been brewing. Some Englishmen, tired of being confined to the factories, made an excursion up the river to a manufacturing town called Fatshan. By doing this they placed themselves outside the pale of protection by the Chinese authorities, who had expressly laid down that no foreigner should be permitted to quit the treaty ports and enter the forbidden land. The natives of Fatshan had never seen European faces before, and it is to be feared

that the first view did not exercise upon them the pleasing influence which their owners may have been led to anticipate. The impulse was to throw stones and revile; and the Englishmen paddled back to Canton amid a hailstorm of missiles hurled by the mob from either bank. The chivalrous behaviour of a mandarin on this occasion deserves particular mention. He insisted upon accompanying the pelted excursionists until they had reached a place of safety, and is reported to have said to the Englishmen: "Follow me closely; my body shall serve you as a shield."* Sir John Davis, who was at that time governor of Hong Kong, chose to treat this affair as an outrage on foreigners for which the Chinese authorities were to be held responsible; and he retaliated by seizing the Bogue forts and making a threatening demonstration before the city of Canton. To this physical argument the Cantonese were obliged to yield; and the concession was obtained from them that resident foreigners should be permitted to undertake journeys into the country, provided the duration of their absence was limited to twenty-four hours.

The second war with China arose nominally out of an incident which occurred in October, 1856, when some mandarins boarded the *Arrow*, a vessel flying the British flag, and captured her crew. The proceedings of the British plenipotentiary, Sir John Bowring, on this occasion were considered so high-handed that they brought about the defeat of the Palmerston government in the House of Commons, on a resolution of Mr Cobden condemning the prime minister's Chinese policy. The case put forward by Commissioner Yeh, the viceroy of Kwangtung, was that the *Arrow* was a Chinese vessel, manned by Chinese, and native owned; that she was engaged in illicit traffic; and that she had no right to the protection of the British flag, the time limit of her registry at Hong Kong having expired ten days before the occurrence

* D. C. Boulger, "The History of China," vol. ii., p. 180.

complained of. The answer to these facts—for such they proved to be—was the destruction of all the Canton forts and the bombardment of the city. It would certainly be acknowledged by judicial-minded people that, if the war of which this hostile proceeding was the initial act had been solely brought about by the *Arrow* affair, the *casus belli* could scarcely be regarded as redounding to our national honour. But it is impossible to read the record of those long years of hopeless friction and vain effort at conciliation, without perceiving how many causes combined to bring about the explosion which occurred in the autumn of 1856. Besides the difficulties and annoyances placed in the way of the merchants, the insecurity of life and property, and the insolent assumption of the mandarins, there was the fact that the viceroy Yeh openly repudiated the terms arranged by the imperial commissioner Keying and declared them to be invalid. There was but one way of obtaining satisfaction, and if the *Arrow* incident was made the pretext for subsequent offensive action it was a regrettable blunder on the part of the British plenipotentiary.

It was, in fact, patent to everybody that the policy of opening up China to the West could not be successfully carried through until a severe lesson had been given to the Chinese. The British government therefore decided to dispatch the reinforcements which had been urgently demanded to Hong Kong, and to send out at the same time an ambassador of high rank, in order that direct negotiations might be entered upon with the authorities at Peking. The appointment was conferred upon Lord Elgin, who was supposed to combine great amiability with the necessary statesmanlike qualities. The British envoy arrived at Hong Kong in July, 1857; but he had unfortunately been compelled to leave his regiments behind him at Singapore, in response to an urgent appeal from India, where the mutiny was in its first stages. It was not until the end of the year that a sufficient force was available for offensive purposes; and the Chinese were speedily apprised of

THE PEI HO

the energy of the barbarian, when once roused to action, by the capture of Canton and the transportation of the troublesome Commissioner Yeh to Calcutta, where he died in prison two years afterwards.

Lord Elgin next proceeded to the Pei Ho, and after some fruitless attempts at negotiation forced his way up the river to Tientsin, capturing without much difficulty the forts that impeded his progress. The emperor Hienfung, thoroughly alarmed at the propinquity of the barbarians, sent two Manchu grandees to Tientsin with full powers to negotiate a treaty. The moment had at last arrived when the advantages might be procured for which England had expended so much treasure. By long and bitter experience the English had learned the utter impossibility of entering into satisfactory relations with the local officials at the treaty ports. The whole object of Lord Elgin's mission was the establishment of direct intercourse at Peking by the ordinary diplomatic method; it was the *raison d'être* of his presence at Tientsin in proximity to the Chinese metropolis. Yet he came away without having accomplished that object. It was the one thing he had come to demand; it was the single point waived by the emperor's plenipotentiaries and left ambiguous. In other respects the Treaty of Tientsin has been called a favourable one; but the experience of the past should have taught the English that paper concessions mean nothing in the Celestial Empire, and that the only hope of making them respected is through the medium of a diplomatic agent accredited to the court, who can, when occasion arises, jog the imperial memory by timely reminders as to the disagreeable consequences of pledge-breaking.

The ratification of the treaty was arranged to take place twelve months later, when the question of an embassy at Peking was to be reopened. Lord Elgin returned to England with the draft in his pocket; and the Chinese busily set about strengthening their position in the north and making the Pei Ho forts as impregnable as possible. When, in the following

year, Sir Frederick Bruce attempted to sail up the Pei Ho on his way to Peking to exchange the ratifications of the treaty, it was discovered that the entrance to the river was barred by iron stakes. In the ensuing attempt to force a passage, the British were severely repulsed by the Taku forts. The ambassador was compelled to return to Shanghai, and report to the Home government the failure of his expedition.

A joint Anglo-French expedition was arranged; and after a delay of twelve months the allied forces arrived, bringing out for the second time Lord Elgin as British plenipotentiary. The defensive preparations of the Chinese were rendered abortive by the unexpected tactics of the allies, who landed their troops and captured the Taku forts by assault. On this, as on former occasions, the Chinese behaved with the utmost gallantry; and although their resistance was ineffective, they did wonders with their inferior weapons opposed to the rifles and artillery of the French and English. When all opposition had been overcome and the allied forces commenced to march upon Peking, every strategy that craft could devise was discussed by the alarmed advisers of the emperor, in order to avert the peril. Attempts were made to catch the invaders in a trap by sending commissioners to discuss terms of peace, with instructions to prolong the negotiations until the advent of winter should cut the barbarians off from all possibility of retreat. Fortunately these tactics did not deceive the commanders of the expedition, and they pushed on towards Tungchow. Here the armies nearly fell into an ambuscade, but were saved by the bravery of Sir Harry Parkes, Loch, and several others, who had ridden forward to make arrangements with the peace commissioners, who had been deputed to meet them there, about a camping-ground for the foreign troops. Loch rode through the enemy's lines to warn Sir Hope Grant, leaving the others at Tungchow; and when he had accomplished his mission he bravely returned to assist in getting his companions out of the scrape. The party then attempted to

ride back through the Chinese lines under a flag of truce; but without respect to the latter they were taken prisoners—a few only managing to escape—and carried off to Peking in chains.

For this act of treachery the Chinese were made to pay a heavy price; though it must be acknowledged that the greatest moderation was displayed by the allied commanders in the face of great provocation. All offers of negotiation were peremptorily refused; the Chinese troops were completely routed; and the Europeans advanced to Peking. At the approach of the barbarians the emperor Hienfung fled to his Mongolian retreat at Jehol, where he remained until his death in the following year, refusing to return to the capital after the disgrace which had befallen his majesty. When it was discovered to what brutal treatment the English prisoners had been subjected, and that many of them had succumbed to the tortures inflicted upon them, Lord Elgin determined on the destruction of the Summer Palace as a lasting mark of Western indignation at the duplicity and barbarous inhumanity of the Chinese authorities. It was in that palace that the Englishmen had been tortured for the gratification of their inhuman captors, and, although the French general was averse to the proceeding, it was burnt to the ground by order of the British minister on 18th October, 1860.

There remained after this merited act of vengeance but one duty to be performed. On the 24th of October Lord Elgin and Prince Kung exchanged the ratifications of the Treaty of Tientsin in the Hall of Ceremonies, by which, in addition to the legalization of the opium trade, protection was guaranteed to missionaries, restrictions as to travelling in the interior were removed under certain reasonable conditions, and several new treaty ports were opened to foreign trade. But by far the most important act at the conclusion of the war was the establishment at Peking of Sir Frederick Bruce, as the first resident minister accredited to the emperor of China by this country.

CHAPTER XX

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

A Period of Civil War—China solidified—Native Appreciation of General Gordon's Character—Prince Kung's *Coup d'État*—Chinese Pride—Mr Lay's Disagreement with Prince Kung—His Dismissal—Diplomatic Results of the Tientsin Massacre—The Murder of Mr Margary—Convention of Chifu—A Mission of Apology—Sir Halliday Macartney—The Marquis Tsêng—The Burlinghame Mission—The Marquis Tsêng at St Petersburg—The Audience Question—The Ceremonial of 1873—Kwangsu's First Reception—Concessions as to Place of Audience—Prince Henry of Prussia—The Empress-Dowager and the Foreign Ladies.

MOMENTOUS as had been the consequences of the foreign invasion of 1860, the attention of Chinese statesmen during the ensuing years was mainly directed towards the adjustment of internal difficulties. For ten years the imperial forces had been unable to cope with the Taiping rebellion, which had laid waste half the empire and was every day assuming more threatening proportions. The Chinese authorities were, in fact, so hard pressed that the viceroy of the Two Kiang actually solicited the aid of the allied forces, which were on their way to attack the capital of the empire. The anomaly of the position naturally prevented the acquiescence of the British commander; but it is a singular fact that while active hostilities were in progress against the Chinese in the north, a force was organized by Europeans at Shanghai for the support of the imperial troops, which afterwards became famous as the "ever-victorious army" under the leadership of Charles Gordon. The rebellion was finally suppressed through the brilliant general-

ship of the British officer in 1865. In the meantime, however, while Central China was suffering from the unparalleled miseries created by the Taipings, the south-western and north-western districts of the empire were the scene of serious Mohammedan outbreaks, which ultimately spread to the frontier provinces beyond the Great Wall; and, to complicate matters still further, a rebellion broke out in the province of Shantung. In the face of all these dangers the central government displayed the most untiring energy; and although, dating from the capture of Peking, seventeen years passed before tranquillity had been restored in every part of the empire, at the end of that period a strong and united China emerged from the ordeal.

One of the most striking features in the development of foreign influences at that stormy period was the appreciation displayed by the Chinese for the noble qualities of the late General Gordon. There was every motive for jealousy and distrust of the foreign commander on the part of the native authorities, whose previous acquaintance with European and American adventurers, who entered the Chinese service for the single purpose of advancing their own personal interests, had given them a low opinion of the honesty of foreigners. But General Gordon vanquished every prejudice, and even overcame the innate suspiciousness of Li Hung-chang, who was inclined at first to measure the newcomer by his own standard of duplicity and self-seeking. Had the Chinese at the first commencement of their political relations with the West come into contact with natures such as Gordon's, it is not improbable that the whole history of China's intercourse with Europe would have been written differently. But, unfortunately, their experience was of a very different stamp of men; and the Chinese were naturally more inclined to generalize from the hordes of adventurers and traders who formed the bulk of their foreign visitors, than from the isolated example of Gordon, who must have seemed as much an exception to them as he did to us.

The most important event in China after the war of 1860 was the *coup d'état* of the following year, by which the present empress-dowager and the principal widow of Hienfung usurped the regency. The effect of this revolution of government was to place Prince Kung at the head of affairs as chief minister and adviser to the two empresses. This move augured well for the foreign element at Peking. It was Prince Kung who had exhibited a thorough appreciation of the new political situation engendered by the action of the allied Powers; to his initiative was due the satisfactory settlement of the foreign demands; and although his diplomatic abilities had naturally been ranged on the side of Chinese seclusion, it was believed that he was thoroughly imbued with a sense of the necessity of progressive measures in the future. Recent history has shown plainly enough the over-sanguine nature of these expectations; and if, in those early days of British diplomacy in China, Prince Kung was looked upon as the most powerful personage in the empire, we know by subsequent events that he was in reality dominated by the autocratic will of the woman who has been the virtual ruler of China for the greater part of the last thirty-eight years.

A strong factor in the situation has been no doubt the colossal pride and conceit of the educated Chinese. Here again, however, difficulties might have been overcome by the exercise of a moderate amount of tact. One can easily imagine the shock it must have been to native susceptibilities to discover in the despised barbarian certain practical superiorities, and the humiliation of the literary officials at finding themselves obliged to learn from rude people who knew nothing about Confucius and the classics, and who would have been unable—however long they were locked up in a cell—to compose a poem or write an elegant essay on a theme three thousand years old. The Chinese are not dreamers; they are practical men possessed of unusual discernment, and it would be absurd to suppose them incapable of perceiving the superiority of Armstrong guns over

bows and arrows, or to imagine that they prefer toiling a week in a junk to spending a couple of hours over a railway journey. But allowances must be made for national pride, which is, after all, by no means a bad quality; and if foreigners had in the first instance paid more regard to the feelings of the Chinese instead of thrusting themselves forward in their eagerness to combine personal aggrandisement with the introduction of useful reforms, progress might in due course have come from inside.

One of Prince Kung's first acts was to commission an Englishman, who had distinguished himself at Shanghai as superintendent of customs, to organize a small fleet of gun-boats. With the example of the European-drilled corps, which was doing such excellent service against the Taipings, before him, it naturally occurred to Prince Kung that a fleet of light-draught gun-boats would be an effective force to employ against the rebels in the south. Mr Lay was accordingly sent to England as agent of the Peking government to make the necessary purchases. Shortly afterwards he informed the Chinese authorities that he had chosen a design for the national flag. To this announcement Prince Kung replied by ordering something quite different. When Mr Lay returned with his flotilla in the following spring, it was discovered that he harboured independent views of his own as to the disposal of the new force, besides differing from Prince Kung on the subject of what should be the pattern of the Chinese flag. Captain Osborn, to whom the command of the flotilla had been given, was instructed by Mr Lay to act only upon orders given to him by the emperor; an arrangement which entirely thwarted the plans of Prince Kung, who wished to place the fleet at the disposal of the provincial authorities in the districts affected by the Taiping rebellion. The Chinese minister not unnaturally considered that those who paid the piper should call the tune, and Mr Lay's extraordinary attitude can only be explained by the supposition that he honestly believed more

good could be done by keeping the fleet independent of local control. Of his zeal in the service of China there can be no question; but everything was, as Mr Boulger observes, "to be attained under his own direction." The natural consequence of this excessive devotion was the prompt dismissal of Mr Lay, followed by the return of the ships to Europe to be sold.

Two important events which exercised considerable influence on the political situation were the Tientsin massacre in 1870, and the brutal murder of Mr Margary in 1874. The causes which led up to the former were described in an earlier chapter,* and it may be added that the victims of the outrage were nearly all of French nationality. In order to appease France it was found necessary to send a mission of apology to Paris; and Chung How, who although chief mandarin at Tientsin had made no attempt to prevent the massacre, in spite of the urgent representations made to him by the foreign community, was accordingly sent over to pledge his word that the local officials were entirely guiltless of complicity in the matter and deplored the outrage that had been committed on French subjects. The minister, M. Thiers, took the opportunity of demanding that the French ambassador at Peking should be received in audience; and although the request could not be immediately complied with, owing to the minority of the emperor, it served to bring into prominence one of the most crucial points in connection with the position of the diplomatic agents of the Treaty Powers, and to accentuate the necessity of taking energetic action as soon as opportunity arose.

The murder of Mr Margary, on the other hand, was the immediate cause of closer intercourse between China and this country through the establishment of a Chinese embassy in London. Into the details of this treacherous and cowardly crime it is unnecessary to enter here; it is sufficient to mention, as an indication of the anti-foreign feeling which still permeated

* See page 180.

the official classes, that subsequent investigations by British commissioners revealed the complicity of the viceroy and other highly-placed mandarins. Little help could be obtained from the Peking authorities in bringing the criminals to justice; which can scarcely be wondered at, considering the fact that after the signing of the Peking convention secret instructions were issued to the provincial governments to disregard the terms of the treaty, a clause of which provided that "the Chinese authorities shall at all times afford the fullest protection to the persons and property of British subjects." No reparation was in fact made until the English ambassador withdrew from the capital, and a naval demonstration frightened the central government into compliance. A convention was signed at Chifu by which important concessions were obtained by Sir Thomas Wade. An indemnity was to be paid on account of the murder and other outrages; the provincial authorities were warned that they would be held responsible for the safety of foreigners travelling within their districts; several new ports were opened to foreign trade up the Yang-tse Kiang; and the upper reaches of the river were pronounced open to steam navigation. This last privilege was ultimately withdrawn, owing to the fears of the authorities that the monkeys and native boatmen would object to the intrusion of steamers and throw stones at them.

It was also stipulated that an embassy should be sent to London for the purpose of conveying to the queen of England an apology for the murder of her subject. A mandarin of high rank, named Kwo Sungtao, was appointed Chinese envoy; and he proceeded to England with his suite, accompanied by Sir Halliday Macartney as adviser and interpreter. The embassy arrived in 1876, and after discharging its mission became permanently established in London. Since that date several eminent Chinamen have come and gone in the capacity of minister to the court of St James; but Sir Halliday has remained a faithful servant of the Chinese government, and, in the words of Mr Boulger when speaking of the rulers of China in con-

nection with their English councillor, "well would it have been for their unfortunate country if they had followed his advice, and stood firm at the right moment and given way when it was prudent and possible to abate with dignity antiquated and untenable pretensions." A couple of years later Kwo Sungtao was superseded by the Marquis Tsêng, the eldest son of Tsêng Kwofan, whose great services to the State during the Taiping rebellion were rewarded by the rare honour of an hereditary title, and himself a man of great ability. His long residence in Europe, and the admiration he expressed for Western institutions, led many people to expect great things when he returned to Peking and became a member of the Tsungli Yamên. But when Tsêng found himself back in his native country, his zeal for Western reform was tempered by the discretion necessary to a minister who wished to keep his head upon his shoulders; and, although he invariably proved himself to be an advocate of progress, he did not succeed in realizing the expectations of his European friends.

Nine years before the arrival of Kwo Sungtao in Europe, the Chinese government sent an embassy to the principal countries of the world under the charge of Mr Burlinghame, who had just retired from the post of United States' minister at Peking. He was accompanied on his mission by a suite of Chinese, and great results were expected to accrue from the extensive tour in contemplation. Unfortunately, however, Mr Burlinghame died at St Petersburg in 1870, and the project had to be abandoned at that stage. The one thing accomplished by the mission was that a number of Chinese had been given a glimpse of Western civilization in its more peaceful aspect; which was highly desirable, the impression on the native mind at home as regards this country being, as Heinfung himself put it, that "the English were always at war, or preparing to go to war with some one." Both Kwo Sungtao and the Marquis Tsêng acted in the capacity of ambassador simultaneously at Paris and London; and a year or so later, when Chung How made a mess

of his diplomatic mission to St Petersburg, the Marquis Tsêng was sent to Russia as minister plenipotentiary to make better terms than his predecessor—a delicate task which he performed with great adroitness and complete success.

When the barriers of Chinese exclusiveness and isolation were broken down in 1860, and the equality of Western nations with China had been theoretically established, it became the chief object of foreign diplomacy to obtain practical recognition on the part of the authorities at Peking of the rights and privileges of the accredited representatives of European Powers. Throughout the long history of China there had not been a single instance of the envoy from a foreign state being received by a Chinese emperor as representing a sovereign on terms of equality with the Son of Heaven, until Lord Macartney, in 1793, refused to kotow, and was made an exception of by the unconventional monarch Kien Lung. The approach of the allied forces in 1860 was, however, attended by the flight of the emperor Hienfung, who died in voluntary exile. He was succeeded by Tungche, a child of four or five years; and the audience question was naturally postponed until the latter should have attained his majority. This event took place in 1873, and after a great deal of pressure it was settled that a reception should be granted to the foreign representatives before seven o'clock in the morning on the 29th of June. The ceremonial demanded of the Europeans was in itself satisfactory, consisting merely of three bows; but it was largely discounted by the fact that the building in which the audience took place, the Tzu Kuang Ko, was used to entertain the envoys from tributary states. The effect of the whole affair was further marred by the dissemination throughout the provinces of a Chinese travesty of the interview, in which the British minister was pictured as being so overcome with fear in the presence of the "August Lofty One" that he fell down, on being addressed by the emperor, speechless and trembling.

Eighteen years passed before opportunity was given for the

foreign representatives to again raise the question of their privileges. In 1888 the emperor Kwangsu himself issued an edict by which he declared his readiness to receive the personal congratulations of the resident ambassadors. It was urgently requested by the latter that the reception should not be held in the Tzu Kuang Ko; but on this point the Chinese officials remained inflexible. Herr von Brandt, who was present at the audience in 1891, declares that the only objection to that much-debated building was the terrible cold, from which the bare-headed foreigners in their thin diplomatic uniforms suffered severely; while the Chinese officials, in their sables and fur caps, looked quite happy and comfortable. He joined with his colleagues, however, in notifying to the Tsungli Yamên that under no circumstances would they consent to be received again in the objectionable Tzu Kuang Ko. In consequence of this resolution the New Year reception was cancelled; and shortly afterwards the Austrian envoy was permitted to present his credentials in the Chang Kuang Tien, a building within the palace precincts. This hall was used until the Japanese war, under stress of which further concessions were made; and when the foreign representatives presented their congratulations in 1894 on the sixtieth anniversary of the empress-dowager, the audience was held in the Wen Hua Tien, which, if not exactly within the palace proper, was at least approximately joined to it. But all these graduated concessions have left the main point unsettled to the present day. If the Chinese emperor recognizes the equality of the sovereigns of other countries, he must grant audiences to their representatives in the Throne hall of the imperial residence, where he is accustomed to receive the New Year congratulations of his own ministers and court officials. Until that point has been yielded, the European envoys will not be regarded by the Chinese as being on a footing of equality with the servants of the Son of Heaven.

Two events have, however, recently occurred which will go far towards achieving the final settlement of this vexed question.

In May, 1898, a few months after the seizure of Kiaochao by Germany, Prince Henry of Prussia was personally received by the emperor Kwangsu at the Summer Palace. The empress-dowager was present at the interview, at which Prince Henry was treated absolutely on terms of equality, conversing with the emperor with the freedom that characterizes the intercourse of members of royal families in Europe. This memorable interview has therefore established a precedent which should bring about a speedy solution of the difficulties that hamper foreign diplomatists at Peking. The other event referred to is the reception accorded to the foreign ladies by the empress-dowager in December, 1898, which forms an even more extraordinary departure from the customs and traditions of the Chinese Empire than that involved by the visit of the German emperor's brother. There is, moreover, connected with it a political significance which merits fuller discussion hereafter.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SHADOW OF RUSSIA

Japan's Motives in 1894—England's Attitude before and after the War—The Treaty of Shimonoseki—The Action of the Powers—Russia and France profit-sharing—A Secret Understanding between Berlin and St Petersburg—Russia taken by Surprise—England forewarned about Port Arthur—A Political Blunder—Russia's Advance upon India—The Kashgar Peril—A Frankenstein Monster—Russia's Duplicity—French Interests—The Outcry in England—A Sham Concession—Herr von Brandt's Summary of the Situation.

THERE is no necessity to enter into a recapitulation of the incidents which led up to the outbreak of the war in 1894. As was indicated in an introductory chapter, Japan was really arming herself for the purpose of thwarting the obvious designs of Russia in the Korean peninsula. The plan of strengthening the Koreans themselves to the task of saving their country from becoming enveloped in the Muscovite shadow which was slowly creeping down from the north, by the introduction of military and administrative reforms, was checkmated by the hostile conservatism of China. War became the final and inevitable expedient, if Japan hoped to retain her influence in Korea ; and the result was the entire annihilation of China's defensive resources, from the destruction of the *Kowshing*, which was conveying Chinese troops to Korea, to the occupation of Wei-hai-wei and the capture of Niu-chwang in the following year.

The part played by England during this critical period in the Far East is to some extent incomprehensible. At first efforts were made to prevent the war; but Russia, France, and Ger-

many refused to co-operate, and the attempt was abandoned. Later on, when hostilities had been definitely entered upon, a second endeavour was made by the British Cabinet to induce the interested Powers to intervene; but with no better success. Up to this point, therefore, England had acted as the friend of China; and may even be said to have afforded her active protection, by warning the Japanese off Shanghai and stationing a British squadron at the mouth of the Yang-tse. But when in April of the following year proposals came from Russia to arrest the progress of the Japanese invasion, which was threatening the capital of the empire, England stood aloof. France and Germany, as we know, acceded to Russia's proposition; and the new Triple Alliance was so far anxious to obtain the co-operation of Great Britain, that action was actually postponed while endeavours were made to overcome her refusal to join the other Powers. It has been thought by many people that pique had a good deal more to do with the attitude of the British Cabinet than policy. England had greater interests to uphold in the Far East than any other Power. She therefore expected to take the lead in organizing concerted action; and as her own proposals had received no support at an earlier stage of the crisis, it was considered beneath her dignity to accept the lead of governments which had practically snubbed her former overtures. It has also been suggested that England would have preferred Japan to Russia as a neighbour in Northern China. In that case one would have expected a vigorous policy on the part of British ministers; and the absolute inaction which characterized the attitude of this country, while other Powers were making hay over the Far Eastern deadlock, scarcely points to the probability of this latter supposition.

When Li Hung-chang went to Shimonoseki in March, 1895, to sue for peace, he had already concluded a secret treaty with Count Cassini, the Russian plenipotentiary, which assured him of Russia's protection against the demands of Japan. He was therefore able to sign away anything he pleased with a clear

Asiatic conscience, being well aware that no territory on the mainland would be allowed to pass into Japanese hands; though it is difficult to believe that a person of Li's cunning was not perfectly cognizant of the fact that the territorial acquisitions saved from Japan would only be reserved for Russia. It is to be feared not only that he knew it, but that the knowledge profited him to a large extent; and that he displayed considerably more business talent over the transaction than what is called patriotism. The success of Li Hung-chang's mission was immensely enhanced by the outrage perpetrated on him by a fanatic a few days after his arrival; which caused a revulsion of feeling in Japan, and led to an immediate suspension of hostilities. Nevertheless, the conditions of peace imposed upon China were extremely severe. It is sufficient to recall the fact that they included the cession of the Liao-tung peninsula, the payment of a heavy war indemnity, and the beneficial provision that several new treaty ports should be opened to foreign commerce.

A WARSHIP

To these terms Li Hung-chang agreed, with the cheerful knowledge that the most important demand would never be enforced; and on the 17th of April the treaty of Shimonoseki was signed, the ratifications being exchanged at Chifu on the 8th of the following month. Li's confidence was not abused. A few days after the signing of the treaty, a polite note was presented to the Japanese government at Tokio

by Russia, France, and Germany, formally protesting against the permanent occupation of the Liao-tung peninsula. No option was left to Japan but to submit; and the territory was given up on payment of an indemnity of six millions sterling. Having gained this object, Russia and France proceeded to make as much political capital out of the situation as they were able; and there was an idea at the time—which subsequent events have served to dispel—that Germany had been cold-shouldered when there was no further need of her services. Russia, for her part, forced a loan upon the Chinese, the terms of which were arbitrarily suited to her own convenience; and the Peking government were not allowed to take advantage of the more favourable conditions attached to a proposed joint loan by financiers of the interested European nations. France secured possession of a large portion of territory on the left bank of the Mekong, consisting of that part of the Shan state of Kiang-Hung which England had ceded to China in the foregoing year, on the express condition that it was not to be handed over to another Power without her acquiescence; and she further obtained concessions in Kwangsi and Yunnan, of which the most important was the right to open up trade relations with Ssŭmao, the commercial centre for the south-west of the latter province.

These were the immediate profits wrung out of China's defenceless position in 1895. England contented herself with obtaining equal rights with France in the province of Yunnan, which is contiguous with her Burmese frontiers; and Germany remained to all appearances without a reward.

But in reality Germany had been promised a very substantial honorarium, as she would herself express it, for the support given to Russia at the conclusion of the war. There is good authority for the statement that an absolute understanding had been previously arrived at between the two Powers with regard to the acquisition of Kiao-chao and the establishment of German influence over the province of Shantung. The sub-

sequent coolness between Germany and Russia is explained by the fact that the action of the former country was wrongly timed, and took her ally completely by surprise. A favourable opportunity for the seizure of Chinese territory occurred when the murder of two German missionaries in 1897 gave Germany a pretext for some act of retaliation. But the time was ill-chosen for Russia, who had not yet completed her arrangements for the counter-stroke in the Liao-tung peninsula; and the forcing of her hand, if it did not place Russian interests in jeopardy, was at least highly inconvenient and completely opposed to the careful deliberation which is characteristic of Muscovite policy.

If Germany's move took Russia at the moment by surprise, the same cannot be said of the execution of the latter Power's carefully-laid plans. For two years prior to the seizure of Port Arthur, the obvious intention of Russia to come down through Manchuria and obtain possession of that strategical position was common talk among diplomatic circles in every capital of Europe. Why, being forewarned, was the government of this country not forearmed? It was evident that when once Russia had been allowed to establish herself at Port Arthur, she could not be ousted from that position without war. The necessity, therefore, was to prevent Russia from going there. A diplomatic warning that the occupation of Port Arthur or Talienwan would be considered in the light of a hostile act, might probably have led, in the opinion of certain authorities who are best qualified to judge in such matters, to the relinquishment of Russia's intention without the disturbance of peace. Russia, as is well known to students of Muscovite policy, does not abandon her carefully-laid plans of expansion and conquest; but she is ready to postpone decisive action for a decade or a generation in the face of a decided check. She does not move until the next step can be taken with the assurance of secure foothold, and she has always exhibited a desire to avoid collision until her whole

strength can be brought to the contest. For the jump down to Port Arthur, Russia was unprepared in 1898; and it is not too much to say that with firmness and resolution the project might have been nipped in the bud and indefinitely—though probably not permanently—postponed.

In spite of the warnings delivered by Sir Henry Rawlinson a quarter of a century ago, and by many military experts and political authorities since, an extraordinary infatuation seems to have always possessed British governments to ignore the pressing danger of Russia's advance on the north-western frontiers of the Indian Empire. But to-day it is not only in Central Asia that we are menaced; there is imminent prospect of India being surrounded by the northern Colossus and his French ally. The advance of Russia during the present century through the barren steppes of Central Asia, unless due to wanton stupidity, points only in one direction. It is inconceivable that blood and treasure should have been poured out unstinted by successive generations for the object of acquiring vast tracts of mostly sterile and unprofitable land sparsely populated by uncivilized, marauding tribes. But when the rich provinces of India are marked out as the goal of Muscovite ambition, the logic of the situation becomes apparent.

If Russia is allowed to swallow Northern China, the safety of India will be seriously jeopardized. In Chinese Turkestan the way has already been prepared by Russian agents; and according to reliable information from an authority who has recently been on the spot, the seizure of Kashgar will take place at no far distant date. This will put Russia in possession of one of the best routes to India, and will add at the same time a most serious factor to the perplexing problem of frontier defence. Unless a decisive blow be struck before Russia's preparations in Manchuria and the Liao-tung peninsula are completed, it is difficult to see how Peking can be saved from falling into her hands. Japan was compelled to evacuate her positions in the peninsula on the ground that her presence

there would be a constant menace to the capital of China. Russia has now taken her place; and what was said of the former Power holds good of the latter. Peking lies, or will shortly be placed, at the mercy of the Frankenstein monster which China herself has been mainly instrumental in raising.

There would be no advantage in repeating the details of the Russian seizure of Port Arthur and Talienwan, which are still fresh in the public memory. But one may recall the fact that the most positive assurances were given to the British government by Count Mouravieff, in the first place, that the presence of Russian warships at Port Arthur in December, 1897, was solely due to the convenience of wintering there; and secondly, when a diplomatic denial of Russia's intentions could no longer be maintained, that Port Arthur and Talienwan would be opened to foreign trade in the event of their being leased to that Power. This system of prevarication has supplied the weapons of Muscovite diplomacy from time immemorial; and it has been demonstrated over and over again that to attempt to meet Russia on her own ground is simply to court defeat. England was either completely taken in by St Petersburg bluff, or she was powerless to prevent the carrying out of Russia's plans. In the latter case, one would be inclined to ask what had become of our supposed predominance in the Far East; whereas if the former were true, it would be advisable for this country to adopt wholly different tactics in respect of future dealings with a nation which cannot be checkmated by ordinary diplomatic methods.

The interests of France remained bound up with the development of her influence in the south-west provinces of China. When Germany and Russia seized upon their respective spheres in the north, France contented herself with once more pressing her claim to exclusive political control in the province of Yunnan. At the same time she obtained the lease of Kwang-chow Bay on the Lienchow peninsula opposite the island of Hainan.

The outcry occasioned by these concessions to Russia, France, and Germany will be too fresh in the memory of the reader to need more than a passing allusion. The nation began to realize that England had been jostled out of her dominant position in the Far East; and the interest of the public at large, which was profoundly ignorant concerning the momentous questions at issue, displayed an inconvenient tendency to become aroused from its prolonged and fatal torpor. A feverish conviction seized all minds that England had been bested by her rivals; and loud demands for corresponding efforts on the part of the British government echoed angrily through the Press. The meagre result of this agitation was the acquisition of Wei-hai-wei, a port on the coast of Shantung, situated, in point of distance, midway between Kiao-chao and Port Arthur. It was acknowledged in Parliament that to render Wei-hai-wei a position of strategical importance would be a very costly proceeding; and up to the present time it has proved useful only for the purpose of figuring in the speeches of Cabinet ministers.

The situation at this period has been summed up by Herr von Brandt in the following words:*—

> Germany is the only country which is really and absolutely interested in seeing China vigorous, strong, and independent; everybody in Berlin is aware of that fact, and it would be grasped in Peking, if the authorities were accustomed to see beyond their noses. It is Russia's aim to make China her vassal, bound to render military service and to afford men and material for the furtherance of Russian objects: Japan can only rely upon an enfeebled China for the carrying out of her projects of expansion. France casts longing eyes on the southern provinces of China, and dreams of extending her colonial empire through Kwangsi and Kwangtung to Canton, and through Yunnan and Szechuan to the upper reaches of the Yang-tse; and England has proved by her attitude during the Japanese war that she is incapable of understanding or appreciating the rôle which China is destined to play in the Far East.

The assurance as to Germany's disinterestedness—immediately following a softened account of the high-handed proceed-

* "Aus dem Lande des Zopfes," p. 193.

ings which terminated in the permanent occupation of Kiao-chao and the insistence on political rights over the hinterland of Shantung—is refreshingly, though unintentionally, satirical. But it would be difficult to pick holes in the criticisms that follow this thoroughly German sentiment. In fact, they hit the nail's head with disagreeable accuracy.

CHAPTER XXII

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Anglo-German Loan—Russian Influence at Peking—Non-Alienation of the Yang-tse Region—The Hong Kong Extension—Rebellion in Kwangsi—Chang's Definition of Foreign Interests in China—The Emperor's Alarm—Drastic Measures of Reform—Revolutionary Proposals—A Free Press—Abolition of the Ancient Essay—A Government cashiered—A Storm of Edicts—The *Coup d'État*—Absence of Foreign Intrigue—Kwangsu's Recantation—The Empress-Dowager's Policy—China's Awakening—Remarkable Meeting of Chinese Merchants—Foreign Escorts at Peking—The Reception of Foreign Ladies—Empress-Dowager without Status—Diplomatic Recognition of an Usurper—The Advent of Italy.

THE early part of 1898 was productive of two events more important to Great Britain than the subsequent acquisition of Wei-hai-wei. One of these events was a shadowy achievement of which the value, as yet imperceptible, may become more apparent at a future time; the other, although it may be said to have resulted in substantial benefit to this country, gave conclusive proof of the growing predominance of Russian influence at Peking.

Into the intricate negotiations respecting the loan to enable China to pay off the balance of the Japanese war indemnity there is not space to enter. The point which needs emphasizing is that although the British government was most anxious to issue the loan on generous and acceptable terms, Russia stepped in directly the negotiations neared completion and peremptorily forbade China to borrow the money. The Chinese minister

in London was instructed by Li Hung-chung to explain that

> The Chinese government had been warned by Russia that their acceptance of a loan guaranteed by Great Britain would entail an interruption in the friendly relations existing between the two empires. In consequence of the minatory attitude assumed by Russia, the Chinese had been obliged to come to a decision not to take a loan from either the Russian government or that of Her Majesty, and the British minister at Peking had been informed accordingly.*

In compliance with instructions from Downing Street the unfortunate Chinese were warned that if they resorted to the expedient of obtaining a loan from European financiers, the friendly relations between the two countries would be seriously imperilled were British banks excluded from sharing in the transaction. The upshot of these threats and counter-threats, by which the unhappy Tsungli Yamên was placed between cross-fires, was the Anglo-German loan of £16,000,000. The warning of England was not without its effect; but evidence was given at the same time of the rapid extension of Russian influence at the capital.

The shadowy achievement referred to was the assurance obtained from the Chinese government respecting the non-alienation of the Yang-tse region. The reply of the Tsungli Yamên to the British minister's request for a definite guarantee on this point was couched in the following terms:—

> The Yamên have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the British minister's dispatch of the 9th February, stating that the Yamên had more than once intimated to him that the Chinese government were aware of the great importance that has always been attached by Great Britain to the retention in Chinese possession of the Yang-tse region, now entirely hers, as providing security for the free course and development of trade. The British minister would be glad to be in a position to communicate to Her Majesty's government a definite assurance that China would never alienate (any territory) in the provinces adjoining the Yang-tse to any other Power, whether under lease, mortgage, or any other designation.

* China blue book, No 1, 1898,

The Yamên have to observe that the Yang-tse region is of the greatest importance as concerning the whole position (or interests) of China, and it is out of the question that territory (in it) should be mortgaged, leased, or ceded to another Power. Since Her Britannic Majesty's government has expressed its interest (or anxiety), it is the duty of the Yamên to address this note to the British minister for communication to his government.

The worth of this assurance is entirely dependent upon the stability of the Chinese government; it is no exaggeration, therefore, to refer to it by the mildly descriptive term "shadowy." China has been aptly compared to a machine for registering the amount of pressure brought to bear upon it by various Powers; and the non-alienation of the Yang-tse region depends wholly upon the weight cast into the balance by the trustees of the English nation.

In addition to Wei-hai-wei, the British minister at Peking succeeded in obtaining an extension of the mainland concession opposite Hong Kong in June, 1898. The territory has been ceded, to "save the face" of China, under the fiction of a lease; but the conditions attached to the transfer by the Chinese government do not appear to have altogether satisfied the British merchants at Hong Kong. There are two objectionable reservations to which exception is taken. In the first place, the city of Kaulung is left under the jurisdiction of Chinese officials. The scum of Canton and Hong Kong resorts to Kaulung; and the British authorities have always wished that the place were under their control, in order that they might make a clean sweep of the thieves and other bad characters located there. And secondly, Sir Robert Hart has demanded, on behalf of the Chinese imperial customs, that the imperial commissioners should be authorized to collect in Hong Kong itself the dues on goods carried to or from Chinese ports in native junks. The latter proposition suggests an encroachment on our privileges against which strong protest has been entered by the Hong Kong chamber of commerce; it having been demanded in return that the Chinese authorities should transfer

the revenue offices to their own territory, and remove their revenue cruisers from British waters.

The rebellion which broke out in the province of Kwangsi during the summer of 1898, of little importance in other respects, is chiefly interesting on account of the proof it furnishes that the recent action of foreign Powers has produced some effect upon the people of China. The proclamation issued by the rebel leader Chang appealed solely to anti-foreign feeling, and contained the following preamble:—

It is ordained by Heaven that I, Chang, a leader of the Hung Sun Tong and a general of the forces, should expel the foreign element from the country and reform the abuses of China. The barbarian nations are strong in Europe, and are now looking at the country like a tiger on its prey, and they covet it in a sly and underhand manner. In China there is not a place they do not want to swallow up, nor money which they do not covet. Over ten years ago the foreign missionaries came and taught the people to disregard the old gods, and spread poison throughout the land. The foreigners take unto themselves the administration whereby the money of the people is stolen and taken out of the country; therefore the foreigners are avaricious and bad. God and the people, Heaven and Earth, unite in anger against these intruders and will not allow it. By professing to be your friends and to help you, they gain your confidence and afterwards deceive you and covet your country.*

Although Chang's language leaves much to be desired from a foreign point of view, it cannot be denied that he succeeded in giving a not altogether unwarrantable exposition of the relations which have hitherto subsisted between Europe and China; though his accusations of peculation on the part of foreigners should have been restricted to territorial robbery, which is not among Christian nations considered an infringement of the eighth commandment when applied to so-called heathen countries.

While Chang was making political capital out of China's reverses, events at Peking tended to show that the action of the foreign Powers had created a tremendous impression upon the young emperor. Edict after edict was issued, in rapid succes-

* *The Times*, 30th Sept., 1898.

sion, commanding the most drastic and revolutionary reforms. The first of these startling rescripts appeared in February, after the seizure of Kiao-chao and at the moment when Russia's attitude in respect to Port Arthur was becoming every day more threatening. The emperor commenced the series by scolding the officials for general neglect of their duties; and he followed up this preliminary attack by a wholesale condemnation of the qualifications demanded of candidates for the public service. He had the unparalleled audacity to declare that essays and poems were useless accomplishments in an administrative department; and he went so far as to explain that men who went out into the world, and gained practical experience of life, were more capable of conducting affairs of state, than boxed-up savants whose studies were entirely restricted to propounding classical conundrums, or putting an extra flourish to the tail of a hieroglyphic.

This was rank heresy in the eyes of the insulted and indignant literati; and it would be difficult to imagine the upheaval caused by the appearance of such blasphemous utterances in the respectable and conservative *Peking Gazette*. It was, however, the mere prelude to a cataract of bewildering exhortations to every conceivable kind of reform. A thorough reorganization of the army was proposed; and the time-honoured institution of military peculation was ruthlessly abolished, regardless of vested interests. An edict was circulated in which the emperor expressed his approval of the establishment of mining schools, where modern engineering methods could be taught by foreign instructors; and in June the emperor announced his intention of sending members of the imperial family abroad to be educated in European fashion, proposing at the same time to found a college of foreign literature and science at Peking.

Apparently these urgent counsels had little effect beyond throwing the whole literary community into a violent commotion; for in August we find Kwangsu severely censuring the officials for their indifference to reform. At this point the

pace began to increase. Determined to make an impression upon the fossil mandarinate, a deluge of innovation was suddenly instituted by the emperor. At Shanghai preparations were made for the publication of a newspaper to support the new forward policy, and the editorship was to be intrusted to the famous reformer Kang Yu Wei. An edict was issued giving full liberty to the Press, in which it was stated that "all the papers should be strict and forward in commenting on public affairs without shrinking. They are allowed to say anything concerning local and foreign affairs, so as to help the imperial court to bring the public affairs to perfection." * But this progressive measure was dwarfed into insignificance by the stupendous announcement that the literary essay on the three-thousand-year-old theme was to be abolished, together with the test of fine penmanship; and that up-to-date essays on modern subjects were to be instituted in their stead.

Before the literati had time to recover from the shock, a thunderbolt fell among them in the shape of an edict which decreed the abolition of a large number of the most lucrative sinecures in the public service, including the disestablishment of six metropolitan bureaux, by which, it is stated, 6000 officials were thrown out of employment; and their consternation was increased by the demand that the useless posts into which it was customary for high mandarins to job their relations and friends should forthwith be made an end of altogether. While the provincial officials were digesting this latest subversion of the old order of things, the capital was thrown into confusion by the cashiering of the presidents and vice-presidents of the six Boards, because the Board of Rites refused—in spite of a recent edict on the subject—to forward a memorial denouncing themselves which had actually been written by a subordinate member of the department.

In September it began to hail edicts. Orders were given

* *The Times*, 17th October, 1898.

right and left for the construction of railways, the exploitation of mines, the adoption of Western sciences, the supersession of running postmen by European methods, the establishment of newspapers and magazines, and the compilation of an annual budget. Even the marquis Ito, whose heart's desire was to see a reformed China, thought that Kwangsu was going ahead a little too fast; and the final catastrophe is said to have been precipitated by an impending edict abolishing the pigtail and ordering the adoption of foreign dress.

On the 21st of the month the world was informed that a *coup d'état* had taken place at Peking, and that the empress-dowager had reassumed the reins of government. The full history of the episode has not been divulged; but it seems evident enough that things were brought to a crisis by the precipitation of the emperor, and that the empress-dowager seized the opportunity, when the whole administrative body at Peking and elsewhere was seething with alarm and indignation at the violent attacks to which it was subjected, to regain the power that had been wrested from her grasp by the forward party in the State. With extraordinary vigour and resolution she proceeded to stamp out the reform conspiracy by locking up the emperor, executing his principal advisers, and making a clean sweep out of the public service of every person known to favour a policy of progress. Kang Yu Wei, the chief offender, managed to effect his escape; and it will be within the recollection of everybody that he was safely conveyed from Shanghai to Hong Kong on board a British vessel. But his brother was executed with indecent haste, together with five other principal conspirators—as the reformers were designated —among whom was a son of the governor of Hupeh.

It seems to have been satisfactorily established that the *coup d'état* was entirely the result of Chinese intrigue, and that Russia—although the contrary was at first surmised—had no hand in the affair. Although the empress-dowager had nominally retired from the government, she continued to

exercise considerable, if not paramount, influence over the conduct of affairs until the end of 1897. According to Kang Yu Wei, who was interviewed after his escape by a correspondent of the *Times*, she had dominated the emperor for the two preceding years. But the seizure of Kiao-chao by Germany roused Kwangsu to the highest pitch of anger, and he is reported to have said to the empress-dowager: "Unless I have the power, I will not take my seat as emperor; I will abdicate." This threat had the effect of silencing the latter for the time being; and the emperor, freed from all restraint, plunged wildly into the schemes of reform which led ultimately to his overthrow and the final triumph of the empress-dowager.

The first act of the imperious lady who had placed herself publicly at the head of affairs was to make the unhappy Kwangsu revoke nearly every progressive edict which had been issued by him. The metropolitan bureaux were set up again, and the 6000 officials reinstated in their former employment. Viceroys and governors received the intimation that they might job their relations and friends back again into the useless posts which had just been abolished. The wretched emperor was even compelled to publish an edict suppressing his own magazine, and to announce the conviction that its circulation would incite the masses to evil. No doubt one of the bitterest pills Kwangsu was made to swallow by his implacable aunt was the restoration of the superannuated essay, which he had taken upon himself to expunge from the curriculum. A decree of 9th October re-established that useful form of composition, and once more asserted the superiority of fine penmanship over practical knowledge as a qualification for the exercise of administrative functions.

The wisdom of the empress-dowager's procedure can hardly be commended. She appears to have deliberately set to work to shatter the prestige of the sovereign; and the consequence of her action will probably be to slacken the already slender hold of the Manchu dynasty on the people of China. In other

respects, however, the empress-dowager has given indications of a thorough appreciation of the critical situation in which China is placed to-day. She has grasped the necessity of reform, and has set about the difficult task with a moderation which is more likely to insure success than the grotesque impetuosity of the hot-headed emperor. The shelving of Li Hung-chang has left her with two advisers, one of whom—the viceroy Yung Lu—is an enlightened Manchu who has had considerable intercourse with foreigners. But the empress-dowager is a remarkably independent person who has never tolerated interference with the carrying out of her political objects; and it is well to recollect that most of the progress made by China has been due to her sanction, if not to her initiative.

The palace revolution of 1898 has brought into strong relief a most important and significant factor in the situation. There are two opposing factions in the State: a party of reform, and a party of reaction. The bare existence of the former is the most hopeful indication of China's awakening. It marks a stupendous departure in Chinese thought; which can only be approximately rated by supposing that we Europeans, threatened similarly by the Yellow races, should suddenly determine to throw aside our cherished conventions and adopt the customs of the Chinese—exchanging the knife and fork for chop-sticks, squeezing our women's feet instead of their waists, and shutting ourselves up in boxes to indite sonnets to Noah's Ark. The fact is that China is progressing at an astonishing speed. The mere production of Kang Yu Wei, the "modern sage," would serve to show that the presence of foreigners at Peking and the lessons of the Japanese war have exercised a far-reaching influence on life in China. And one cannot be blind to the fact that Kang is merely the most prominent member of a large and growing movement, and that there has been plenty of indication of the young China party possessing adherents all over the country.

A significant example of this fact was given at Hong Kong

on 22nd January of the present year, when a meeting of the most influential Chinese took place at the Chinese chamber of commerce, for the purpose of discussing the views which had been expressed by Lord Charles Beresford on the conclusion of his visit to the treaty ports. The reader will remember that Lord Charles insisted upon the maintenance of the "open door" as the only policy likely to preserve the integrity of China; and that he advocated administrative reforms and a reorganization of the army on European lines. These opinions were endorsed by the Chinese merchants at Hong Kong, who passed a resolution pressing for reforms in the method of paying officials as a first step towards the regeneration of their country. It is notable that the meeting was absolutely spontaneous, and had not been brought about in any way through foreign influence.

The anti-foreign demonstrations at Peking, and the introduction of foreign escorts into the capital to protect the Western legations in October, 1898, showed the spirit in which the change of government was regarded by the Chinese rabble. But although it was at first feared that the advent of the reactionary party to power would seriously jeopardise the lives and interests of Europeans, it soon became evident that the new policy was to be guided with great moderation. The empress-dowager, in fact, astonished the world by consenting to receive the ladies of the diplomatic body at Peking in audience. The most progressive of Kwangsu's edicts did not break more completely with all Chinese notions respecting etiquette and precedent than this bold resolution on the part of the empress-dowager. But the picture presents an altogether different aspect when viewed from a European standpoint.

The fact that the wives of the foreign ministers went to pay their respects to the empress-dowager after the *coup d'état* cannot be devoid of political significance. The latter, it must be remembered, has no status whatever. Her position—even in China, where elderly ladies enjoy a great amount of authority

in the family council—is similar to that of a dowager-queen or empress in any European country. The emperor Kwangsu is still nominally the sovereign of China, and no official intimation has been given to the foreign Powers that he has been deposed, or that his authority has been delegated to another. The seven foreign ministers at Peking are accredited to the emperor, and it is an unheard-of occurrence in international relations that an usurper should be officially recognized while the reigning sovereign remains undeposed. The fact seems to have escaped general remark that there is actually an empress of China — the legitimate consort of Kwangsu—and that so long as the latter remains nominally head of the State, the respects of the ladies of the diplomatic body are due to his wife in the first instance. There would have been no objection to the European ladies being received in audience by the empress-dowager, if they had first requested an audience of Kwangsu's consort, the first lady in the empire; but the manner in which the whole arrangement was carried out gave the clearest possible recognition to an anomalous and most unbusiness-like state of affairs.

It is no concern of the representatives of foreign countries what personality may happen to be the real power in the State, provided relations are ostensibly conducted with the nominal ruler to whom they are accredited. But the case wears a wholly different complexion when diplomatic etiquette is entirely thrown to the winds, as appears to have been the case at Peking. To what embarrassing complications the practical recognition of an usurper as sovereign in China may lead, no one can tell. But it is well to recollect that the antagonism to foreigners in China has been partly due to the irregular manner in which our relations with that country have been directed in the past; and it is easy to predict that unless official intercourse is placed upon a proper business footing, there will be increased friction in the future.

The latest factor in the situation is the arrival of Italy as a

candidate for the concession of a sphere of influence. The political and commercial privileges demanded by the Italian government cover that portion of the province of Chekiang which is not drained into the Yang-tse. They also stipulate for the right to construct a railway from Sammun Bay, which they propose to lease as a coaling station and naval base, to the lake of Poyang. The latter comes distinctly within the supposed British sphere; but it is not possible to comment on proceedings which, at the date of writing, are in an embryonic stage. At all events the British government will have no difficulty in arriving at a friendly understanding with so desirable a neighbour.

The principal significance of this new move is the practical and general recognition of the sphere of influence policy which it involves. When Japan has set her seal upon the province of Fukien, but little of the sea-board will remain under the control of the Chinese government; and every step will then bring us nearer to the dreaded possibility of partition and dismemberment.

THE ARSENAL FOUNDED BY DR MACARTNEY

CHAPTER XXIII

CHINA IN PROGRESS

The First Arsenal—Dockyard at Fuchow—The Chinese Navy—The China Steam Navigation Company—Destruction of the first Telegraph Line—Laying of a Cable between Hong Kong and Shanghai—Rapid Extension of Inland Telegraphic Communications—Hostility to Railways—Their Advantage in Times of War or Famine—Chinese Arguments against their Introduction—Fate of the First Railway—Opposition organized by the Literati—A Favourable Edict—Memorial recommending Railway Construction—Strategical Advantages emphasized—Divided Councils—Chang Chi-tung's Proposition—The Hanyang Mills—The Northern Railway System.

THE necessity of adopting the mechanical inventions of Europe was forced upon the Chinese by the war of 1860, when they had conclusive evidence at least of the superiority of Western armaments. Dr (now Sir Halliday) Macartney had no difficulty, therefore, when the imperial forces began to run short of ammunition, in persuading Li Hung-chang to let him set up an arsenal for the manufacture of war material. The experiment was made at Suchow, the arsenal being afterwards moved to Nanking; and with the aid of European engineers the machinery and plant were erected in a factory built by Chinese workmen. There was great difficulty in finding a man capable of turning a Boxer fuse, but Dr Macartney discovered a carpenter in Shanghai, who, after a hundred unsuccessful experiments, succeeded in making what was wanted. These amateurs then proceeded to turn out guns, shells, and all the accessories of war; and it was not long before a similar estab-

lishment was built at Fuchow, with the addition of a dockyard for the purpose of building steamers which were to form the nucleus of a navy.

The Chinese dockyards were not able to keep pace with the new inventions and rapid improvements in the construction of warships. Ironclads, and other modern vessels, were accordingly purchased from time to time in Europe; and when Captain Lang was appointed naval instructor by the authorities at Peking, he found quite a respectable fleet at his disposal. Unfortunately, things did not work smoothly; although in this case no blame was attaching to the English officer. The Chinese have never been able to tolerate the idea of taking orders from a European; and consequently Captain Lang found his position so untenable that he was forced to give it up. The few years which intervened between the resignation of Captain Lang and the war with Japan amply sufficed for the development of a total inefficiency. The old story of peculation, conceit, and incapacity was repeated, with the lamentable results which are fresh in everybody's memory.

While the central government was attempting the organization of a navy, there grew up the one steamship company which China possesses. The China Merchants' Steam Navigation company, which is stated by Mr Gundry to have owed its conception to Li Hung-chang, is a native enterprise, managed by government officials, and financed by Chinese merchants. The development of the company's trade is hampered by the fact that it is confined to the treaty ports, apparently on the assumption that if the area were enlarged foreigners would wish to follow suit. The official classes in China would rather leave the resources of their country untouched and cramp the native trade, than concede to a European an inch more than they are compelled to at the point of the bayonet. Native merchants would, if left to themselves, probably behave differently; but private enterprise is discouraged by the government, and the general trade of the country suffers in consequence of the

dislike evinced by Chinese capitalists to invest their money in undertakings controlled by the State.

A couple of years after the founding of the first arsenal an attempt was made by an Englishman to set up an electric telegraph. This unwarrantable interference with the mysteries of the Feng-Shui was immediately avenged; and the superstitious peasantry, egged on by the mischievous literati and the native professors of geomancy, made short work of the apparatus. It was not until the year 1871 that a cable was laid between Hong Kong and Shanghai by the Great Northern Telegraph company. Of this enterprise Mr Gundry gives the following interesting account:*—

> Hong Kong being a British colony, there was of course no difficulty at that end; nor was there, I believe, any attempt to interfere with proceedings on the coast. But great uneasiness was shown by the officials when the Yang-tse was reached, and it became a question of laying the cable up the river and landing it at Shanghai. The shore end was, in fact, landed surreptitiously in the middle of the night; and for some time no one, not even foreigners, knew the precise spot. The excitement gradually subsided, and when they could venture to disclose their hiding-place, the company's agents invited certain wealthy Chinese, and began telegraphing for their edification. They were greatly interested, but very sceptical, till one more venturesome than the rest undertook to telegraph to a correspondent in Hong Kong for a consignment of goods by the next steamer. Here was a test: would the goods come? They did! And the fact of telegraphy was established.

The same kind of performance took place when a loop of the cable was landed at Amoy two years later; but official leave to work the lines was first obtained in 1875. After a great deal of persuasion the central authorities consented to the establishment of inland communications; and by the construction of a line from Tientsin to Shanghai, the Celestial Empire was placed in communication with Europe. The next step was the extension of the line to Peking; and in spite of the Feng-Shui and other ingenious methods of obstruction,

* "China Past and Present," p. 97.

telegraphs were soon set up connecting the empire from Shanghai to Chungking, and from Canton to the Russian frontier on the Amur. To-day, in fact, telegraphic communication has been established between the majority of the principal towns in China; and Peking has been placed since 1892 in direct communication with St Petersburg by junction with the Siberian lines in the Amur valley.

Although the Chinese quickly recognized the advantages—from a military point of view—of telegraphs, they have never been brought to a thorough appreciation of the utility of a railway system. Apart from the sentimental and superstitious absurdities which have been put forward as arguments against the introduction of railways, there are grounds of objection which rest upon more practical foundations than the fear of offending spirits or of disturbing the repose of deceased ancestors. The latter difficulty has been in any case much exaggerated; and business men who have had experience of buying up small holdings for the purposes of railway construction, say that the scruples of the peasantry on this point are easily overcome, if assurances are given that a favourable site for a new burial-ground will be purchased in lieu of the one which is being given up. It is in reality the hostile literati who find the Feng-Shui a better argument with the common people than the intricacies of political economy. But, although there may be immediate profit to Europe in securing contracts for the building of railways in China, it is by no means certain that an equal benefit will be derived from the innovation by the Chinese themselves. It must be remembered that the conditions of life in China are wholly opposed to the hurry and bustle from which we suffer in Europe; and that, from a commercial point of view, the same interchange of the necessaries of every-day existence is not obliged to take place. In other words, the Chinese are happily able to provide themselves with what they require, while taking things more easily and leisurely than is the case with us

There is much to be said, of course, on the point that railways would be valuable in times of war or famine. The former was acknowledged by the Chinese authorities eleven or twelve years ago; and if China is compelled to impoverish herself by making war preparations on the same burdensome scale as the rest of the world, she will undoubtedly need a few railways, at least, for the effective transport of her troops. That the famine question could be disposed of without the aid of railways has been proved by the history of the past. The public granaries, in which provision was made for the periods of want engendered by flood or drought, were sufficient to meet the needs of the people in times of distress. It does not follow, because the central and provincial governments neglect their duties and omit to take the prescribed measures to provide against famine, that railways are the only possible remedy.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to show that reason is not wholly on the side of those who wish to see China adopt every modern improvement; and that the opposition of the Chinese to railways is not a mere question of uncompromising hostility to everything foreign, but may really be said to be based upon more or less sound conviction. When Simon boasted to the Chinese about the steam traffic and other mechanical inventions of Europe, and asked their reasons for not adopting them, they replied :*—

All that is very fine and perhaps excellent in your country, but it does not suit us and would be a detestable innovation. We have numerous and magnificent canals which our ancestors have bequeathed to us. They cost a great deal in the first instance, but have long since been paid off. Thanks to wind and current, the cost of transport is low. The traffic on our rivers and canals is considerable ; but the necessaries of life are more or less equally distributed in all parts of the country, and have seldom very far to travel. Our agriculture, as varied as it is fruitful, everywhere provides the people with a certainty of subsistence. Where rice cannot be produced, wheat, maize, millet, etc., are grown. As for less useful commodities, there is always enough of them ; and in all cases there is no need

* "La Cité Chinoise," p. 86.

of rapid and expensive transport. In our country, to be brief, it may be stated that, bar accidents, production and consumption are evenly balanced. It is true that we have frequent inundations. But do you not suffer from them also? It is the fault, as you are aware, of the land being in many places lower than the river-beds. We have guarded against them as much as possible by our canals and by the construction of great damming works; every day fresh provision is made against them by raising the level of our land, and floods are becoming rarer than before. How could railways cope with such calamities better than the provident granaries which we have established wherever it has been found possible?

Whatever opinions one may personally hold as to the utility of a railway system in China, it is well to take the views of educated and intelligent Chinese into consideration.

The history of the first railway introduced into China affords an instructive insight into the inner workings of the native mind. Some English merchants at Shanghai conceived the idea of making an experimental line to Wusung, a distance of about ten miles. It was completed in 1876, and the greatest interest and curiosity were manifested by the people, who flocked to the station in large numbers to enjoy the novelty of a trip by the new invention. The first opposition came from the mandarins; and one must suppose that they determined, in the belief that railroads were undesirable and would prove derogatory to the interests of the community, to spoil the venture at all hazards. A native, who is generally supposed to have been bribed to commit suicide, was run over by a train and killed. An organized outcry was raised by the officials, who demanded the life of the engine-driver in return for that of his victim. As this agitation produced no satisfactory results, the mandarins resolved to get up a popular riot; and as the common people are accustomed to obey authority, there was every prospect of mob violence. In the face of this danger the promoters of the scheme were induced to sell the whole concern to the local authorities, who tore up the rails and sent the offending apparatus away to the island of Formosa, where most of it was allowed to

rust.* It cannot be said that this pioneering effort failed on account of the ignorant opposition of the people. As long as the line was open to traffic every train was crowded with enthusiastic travellers; and there was no display of hostility until the literati commenced a campaign against the innovation. It has been clear throughout the short history of railway enterprise in China that the mass of educated Chinese opinion is strongly averse to the establishment of steam communications.

The war with France in 1884 gave a direct impetus to the recognition of railways as a necessary means of transport when dealing with Western adversaries; and three years later an edict was issued by the present empress-dowager, approving a scheme to construct an experimental line at Tientsin. A couple of paragraphs may with advantage be quoted from the memorial, submitted by the Board of Admiralty, which received the imperial sanction.

"In our deliberations," write the memorialists, "we have duly recognized the fact that the circumstances of China have from ages past differed widely from those of other nations; and while we are fully cognizant of the many and great advantages to be derived from railways, we have not been blind to the financial difficulties, nor to the objections that might exist to an unsightly network of railways being spread like a web over the land, as is the case in many countries. On the other hand, when we consider the important advantages to be gained in the facility and rapidity with which troops and material can be moved from place to place, we are convinced of the desirability of taking the best measures in this direction."

It will be seen from the above that the proposed railway commended itself to the Board chiefly on account of its strategical advantages. The proposal was to extend a short line, which had been laid down by Mr Kinder from the Kaiping mines to the banks of the river Chi for the conveyance of coal, as far as Tientsin. It was put forward by the memorialists on account of the facilities it would give for coaling the fleet; and the suggestion was made at the same

* A new line from Shanghai to Wusung was completed in 1898.

time that the line from Kaiping might afterwards be extended northward along the sea-board to Shan-hai-kwan. It will be within the knowledge of every one that this project has since been fully carried out; though not without encountering serious hindrances. A fire at the imperial residence gave the censors an opportunity of throwing the blame for the occurrence on the foreign innovation, and they succeeded in putting a temporary stop to the carrying out of the projected extensions. A heated controversy ensued, in which the conservative party found themselves opposed to the empress-dowager, Prince Chun, Li Hung-chang, and other powerful officials. There is little doubt as to which side would have won, had not the well-meaning, but intractable, viceroy Chang Chi-tung put in his oar with a proposition which has done more towards hindering railway enterprise in China than anything else. In the first place, Chang Chi-tung deprecated the construction of railways near the coast, because, he declared, it would enable an invading force to gain rapid access to the interior. Secondly, he urged that the entire undertaking should be carried out without the assistance of foreigners; that factories should be set up in China, in which all the accessories could be manufactured from the natural resources of the country; and that Chinese labour should be employed to execute the work, supported solely by Chinese capital.

Thereupon Chang Chi-tung was transferred from Canton to the viceroyalty of Hupeh and Hunan, with orders to construct a line from Hankow to Peking. In 1891 the viceroy commenced building enormous iron and steel mills at Hanyang, in order to carry out his patriotic designs. "The works were designed by an English engineer," reports Mr Child, U.S. consul at Hankow, "on a most gigantic scale . . . If ever finished, it will be one of the most complete rolling mills in the world, as expense seems to have been a secondary consideration in the erection of this immense establishment." The practical results of Chang Chi-tung's enormous and wasteful expenditure

appear to be thoroughly unsatisfactory. Lord Charles Beresford, during his tour of inspection in the Yang-tse valley, visited the ironworks in November, 1898, and found them in a deplorable state of inefficiency owing to the chaotic administration of the native officials. It appears that rails are being supplied by the works for the Pao-ting—Chengting section of the Lu-han trunk line, but that they have been reported on unfavourably. This is all that the unpractical zeal of the viceroy has been able to accomplish towards building the great central railway, which has after all been handed over—in the absence of Chinese capital—to a foreign syndicate.

While Chang Chi-tung was hampered by the magnitude of his schemes at Hanyang, his rival Li Hung-chang went steadily on with the extension of the Kaiping line in the metropolitan province. Lack of funds prevented the work from being carried forward with great rapidity, but in less than ten years communication was established between Tientsin and Shan-hai-kwan; and in 1897 a railroad was working from the former city to the capital of the empire. These lines, together with a third extending from Peking in a southerly direction as far as Pao-ting, are the only railways which China possesses to-day, with the exception of the line which has been re-constructed between Shanghai and Wusung. There is a short line in the island of Formosa which was constructed under the auspices of a progressive Chinese governor; but as the island has passed into the possession of Japan since the war, the metropolitan province enjoys at the present moment the sole distinction of containing anything like a railway system.

CHAPTER XXIV

RAILWAY ENTERPRISE

A Comprehensive Programme—Difference between Concession and Construction—Will Foreign Capital be Forthcoming?—Russian Projects—Trans-Siberian Railway—The Trans-Manchurian Concession—The Chinese Share of the Bargain—Progress of the Trans-Siberian Line—Russian Railway Enterprise in China Proper—The Lu-han Concession—Russian Aims and British Policy—The Continuation of the Trunk Line to Canton—French Designs—The Yunnan Concession—Projects in the South—Railways in Shantung—Anglo-German Enterprise—British Undertakings—The Shansi—Siang-yang Concession—Great Scheme for connecting Burma with the Yang-tse—The Shan-hai-kwan Extension to Niu-chwang.

THERE is nothing more misleading than a railway map of China. The impression conveyed to the mind is that a comprehensive scheme of communications is about to be put into execution. The time when the traveller will be able to travel comfortably by train from end to end of the vast empire seems, at first sight, to be merely dependent upon the celerity with which the engineering work can be carried out. A great trunk line joins Peking and the commercial centre of Hankow, being prolonged southwards to Canton, whereby Hong Kong is placed in rapid communication with the capital. Another main route joins Peking and Shanghai, the commercial metropolis of China. A third great line across the mountainous regions of Yunnan promises to place Burma and India in communication with the Yang-tse river, and thereby with the whole Chinese empire. A fourth series of dots unites Yunnan-fu, in the extreme west, with the southern port of Canton. And a fifth main line

indicates the juncture of the rich mineral districts of Shansi with the centre of the distributing trade on the Yang-tse river. Besides these great trunk railways, there are numerous minor projects. The Germans are going to intersect Shantung with a ring of railways; all the important ports on the east coast are to be connected; the Russians purpose joining the Peking—Chengting line with Tai-yuen in Shansi; and British Kaulung is to be placed in direct communication with the neighbouring city of Canton.

In viewing this programme of railway enterprise, one must not forget that there is a vast difference between railway concession and railway construction. The two may, indeed, be said to be separated by a financial gulf which is frequently incapable of being bridged over. A concession is merely the first step—one might call it a "feeler"—in the direction of company promotion; and it is well to bear in mind that the future railway system of China does not depend upon the number of concessionaires who come forward with paper schemes—and generally nothing else—in their pockets, but upon their capacity to persuade the public to invest money in the enterprise. These remarks do not apply to solid schemes such as those backed by institutions like the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank, and they are not intended to reflect upon any particular project; but it is notorious that a great deal of gambling goes on, when a concession—however worthless—may be sold at a handsome profit to unsuspecting purchasers. The foreign ministers at Peking are careful, no doubt, to urge only those claims which appear *bonâ-fide;* but it is open to everybody to take a pen and rule a line across China, without troubling about geographical conditions, and then rush off to Peking to try and get the concession. When this has been obtained, it is a marketable commodity with which an advantageous deal may be made; and the potentialities of the scheme can be left for the purchasers to discover for themselves.

There may be worthless, and there may be valuable, concessions. But for the present, at any rate, the actual construction of trunk lines in China exists in the shadowy realms of adventurous imaginations. Except in connection with the loan offered by the British and Chinese Corporation, there does not appear to have been a single prospectus issued as yet; and any surveys which have been made are for the most part of the roughest description. China herself has in vain appealed to native capitalists for funds with which to carry out a progressive programme of railway construction without foreign aid. She has failed because Chinese merchants distrust the government officials, and will not risk their money in financing undertakings which are controlled by them. In spite, therefore, of Chang Chi-tung's patriotic endeavours to act in accordance with the national dictum "China for the Chinese," it has of necessity been left to foreign enterprise to provide China with the railways which she does not really wish to have. It remains to be seen if the public in Western countries will be willing to put their capital into schemes which, as regards both political and commercial considerations, are somewhat vague and obviously hazardous.

The absolute control which the Russian government possess over the financial resources of their country stamps every state undertaking as capable of being carried into effect. The two greatest railway schemes in the history of engineering are the Trans-Siberian and Central Asiatic railways. The latter needs scarcely more than a passing allusion; as, whatever may be the future intention of Russia, the line has not at present been extended beyond Tashkend, and can scarcely be said to menace Chinese Turkestan at that point. To which may be added the fact that the whole energy and resources of the Russian government are at present concentrated on constructing the section of the Trans-Siberian line between the lake of Baikal in Siberia and its projected terminus Port Arthur. The history of this colossal undertaking needs no repetition. It will be remem-

bered that the original scheme was to make Vladisvostok the objective of the railway, which was intended to skirt round the Manchurian provinces, following the course of the Amur river as far as Khabarovka. From the latter point the line has already been constructed to Vladisvostok, a total length of 487 miles; but in September, 1896, a treaty was concluded with the Chinese government conceding to Russia the right of making a short cut through Manchuria.

The new route will save 152 miles; but the principal object of the deflection became apparent when Russia seized upon Port Arthur, an event which had been plainly foreshadowed by the Trans-Manchurian concession. In order to uphold the dignity of China, the Russians indulge in the pleasing fiction of calling the proposed line the Chinese Eastern Railway; but how far it is Chinese may be gathered from the fact that there is not a single Chinese shareholder in the whole concern. "The Russians hold all the shares and retain the exclusive control, management, and profits," remarks the Peking correspondent of the *Times;* * "the Chinese provide the clients and compradores, some of the under clerks, and all the servants. It is a conjunction of interests typical of Russo-Chinese combinations generally." As the railway is being built of Russian material and by Russian engineers, it may be pertinently asked where the Chinese come in at all. The compensation offered to China partakes of the same cynical character as the title of the Trans-Manchurian line; it is agreed, namely, that the railway shall belong to her at the expiration of 80 years! It would scarcely require a prophet to foretell what government will be seated in Peking long before that date has been reached.

The rails of the Trans-Siberian line have been laid as far as Irkutsk, on the shores of the lake of Baikal. The Russian engineers encountered great obstacles at this point. The route round the head of the lake offers considerable engineering

* *The Times*, 7th March, 1898.

difficulties; it was therefore decided, in order to lose as little time as possible, to construct a ferry capable of conveying a train across the lake, which is to be used until the establishment of through railway communication. Meanwhile the Trans-Baikal portion of the line is being pushed forward with all possible haste, and the entire railway connection down to Port Arthur is to be completed by 1903.

Russia has, however, by no means confined her railway enterprise to districts north of the Great Wall. The Russo-Chinese bank—which the China Association has designated a Russian State bank—has financed the construction of a line from Peking to Chengting, already half completed. A concession has also been obtained by the bank for the extension of the line to Tai-yuen in the province of Shansi; and it is no secret that the Russians are trying to secure a further concession for the construction of the permanent way down to Si-gnan in the adjoining province.

But by far the most important undertaking in which Russia is engaged within the limits of China Proper, is the construction of a great trunk line joining Peking with Hankow, which, although nominally conceded to a Belgian syndicate, will in reality be completely controlled by Russia and France. The finances of the line are to all intents and purposes wholly in the hands of the Russo-Chinese bank; and the whole affair has been managed so adroitly by the French and Russian ministers at Peking that, while masking any political design, they have practically acquired the ownership and direction of the railway. When it is remembered that the foreign Powers have tacitly defined their spheres of interest in China by obtaining concessions to build railways and by rigidly opposing the intermeddling of other countries within those spheres, it will be seen that the projected trunk line to Hankow is a severe check to our pretensions in the Yang-tse valley. It is difficult to reconcile our giving way to Russian demands in the matter of the Shan-hai-kwan extension to Niu-chwang, and our failure to impose upon

Russia similar restrictions in regard to the Peking-Hankow railway, with the firm and vigorous policy of a country whose commercial and political interests are predominant in the Far East. By admitting the right of Russia to dictate terms to us north of the Great Wall, we have acknowledged Manchuria to be her sphere of interest. Whereas, on the other hand, we have accomplished little short of an absolute denial of our asserted rights in the Yang-tse valley, by allowing Russia and France to control the main communications of our pretended sphere without effective protest.

In connection with the Lu-han concession, authorizing the construction of a trunk line from Peking to Hankow, it may be added that a British-American syndicate has applied for a concession to continue the railway down to Canton. There is no reason to suppose that the request will be refused; but at the date of writing, although repeated statements have been made during the past months which would lead one to suppose that arrangements had been satisfactorily completed, no concession has been definitely granted by the authorities at Peking. It is just the same with some other so-called concessions, which, far from having been authorized by the Chinese government, are at present merely speculative schemes which figure on railway maps of China as having received the sanction of the authorities.

Turning to Russia's junior partner in the Far East, one cannot help observing that the two principal railway projects with which France is connected are mainly designed to thwart British interests. The chief of these, the Lu-han concession, in which Belgium was put up as a preliminary blind, has already been discussed. The second scheme is the projected line from Laokai on the Tongking frontier, through the valley of the Red river, to the capital of Yunnan. The route has been recently surveyed, and the money for the undertaking has been guaranteed by the French government. The railway will therefore be built; and its political object is not far to seek.

Everybody is aware that the French are anxious to be beforehand with us in securing the trade of Yunnan, and in hall-marking the province as their sphere of interest; but there appears to be a considerable difference of opinion amongst experts as to whether or not the trade of Yunnan is worth having. However that may be, it will presently be seen that in this case, at any rate, the possible interests of Great Britain are not to be left in the lurch; and that steps have been taken to secure equal advantages with France, should the scheme which has been put forward prove feasible.

Besides the projected railway to Yunnan-fu, France has obtained other concessions which appear to have been more or less shelved in favour of the pet scheme mentioned above. In 1895 M. Gérard, the French minister at Peking, procured for the Fives-Lille company the right of constructing a line from Lungchow to Nanning, the intention being to constitute Hai-fong, in the gulf of Tongking, the commercial outlet for the province of Kwangsi. But the opening of Wuchau on the West river in 1897, which was achieved by Sir Claude MacDonald in the face of prolonged French opposition, knocked the project on the head, and there is no present likelihood of its being carried into effect. The same thing may be said of the Pakhoi—Nanning concession, which was obtained by M. Pichon in May, 1898; and the thorough opening of the West river, which is likely to follow on the recent constitution of Nanning as a treaty port, will serve to throw further cold water on French designs regarding the trade of South-West China. The more ambitious plan of uniting Nanning with Yunnan-fu on the one side, and Canton on the other, has little probability of being put into execution at present.

Germany has three railways in contemplation, of which two possess little importance outside her own sphere; unless, as has been suggested, the imperial capital should be removed to Kai-fong in the adjoining province of Honan, in which case Kiao-chao would become the chief port of the empire. Of these

minor enterprises, the principal line will connect Kiao-chao with Tsi-nan, near which point a junction will be effected with the Tientsin-Chinkiang railway. The second, which does not appear to be of much practical value, is to run parallel with the coast line from Kiao-chao to I-chow, in the immediate neighbourhood of which lie extensive coal-fields. But it would be superfluous to make a railway to I-chow to facilitate the carriage of coal, as there is an abundant yield for present wants from the mines at Wei-hsien and Poshan on the Tsi-nan line; and according to Herr von Hesse-Wartegg, who made a tour of inspection in 1898, there is very little passenger traffic to be anticipated between I-chow and Kiao-chao.

The third project, in which Germany is jointly interested with this country, is the construction of a railway connecting Tientsin with Chinkiang. Early in 1898 a concession for this line was granted by the Chinese government to an American citizen of Chinese parentage; but the failure of the latter to obtain funds, and the opposition of Germany to the building of a railway within her sphere by anybody else, caused the collapse of the scheme. The Tsungli Yamên have promised that a concession for this line shall be granted to the co-operating syndicates; and the Germans have apparently made the stipulation that each syndicate shall complete the undertaking within its own sphere: the Germans constructing and controlling the line from Tientsin to the southern frontier of Shantung, while the English effect their share of the work and subsequent administration from that point down to the terminus at Chinkiang. The importance of this scheme is second only to the trunk line which is to be built connecting Hankow on the Yang-tse with Peking. Its construction will effect through communication between the political and the commercial metropolis of the empire, and is certain of attracting a large and lucrative traffic; in addition to which the railway will possess, in the event of a foreign war, a strategic value far in excess of that of the inland line.

The sum of British achievement in the history of railway

concessions is respectable, although not altogether adequate when judged by comparative interests. Commercially speaking, the most important project with which British enterprise is associated will be the Tientsin-Chinkiang line already described. Closely connected with this scheme in point of utility is the projected railway from Ningpo to Nanking, *viâ* Hangchow, Shanghai, Wusung, and Chinkiang; which, by effecting a junction at the last-named point, will place Tientsin and the imperial metropolis in direct communication with the principal treaty ports on the east coast. Of great benefit, also, will be the short line between British Kaulung and Canton, for which a concession has recently been granted by the Chinese government.

We now come to two ventures, one of which is of considerable commercial interest, while the other, if found practicable, should prove of great political significance besides being advantageous from a trade point of view. In the first place, it will be within the recollection of everybody that in the early part of 1898 a concession was made to the Peking syndicate—an association formed by British capitalists—of extensive coalfields in the province of Shansi. The Peking authorities were guardedly approached through the medium of the Italian representative, and eventually the right was obtained for the syndicate of making a railway from the mines to Siang-yang on the Han river. By this means access can be obtained by water to the distributing centre Hankow, the Yang-tse ports, and the southern and western districts of the empire. The mineral wealth of Shansi was alluded to in a former chapter;* and it is obvious that if the spirit of industrial enterprise be awakened in the Chinese, the "land of coal and iron," as Richthofen has designated the province of Shansi, will develop a trade which is bound to create an immense and lucrative traffic on the Siang-yang line.

* *See* p. 16.

The second project alluded to, is the somewhat visionary scheme for the establishment of railway communication between Burma and a point on the Yang-tse river near the important commercial centre of Chungking in Szechuan. A line is now in course of construction between Mandalay and Kunlong Ferry, the latter place being situated on the Yunnan frontier. It is proposed, or rather urged, that this line should be continued through the barren and mountainous province of Yunnan to Yunnan-fu, and that it should be further extended to a navigable point of the Yang-tse river in the immediate neighbourhood of Chungking, the commercial metropolis of Western China. There appear to have been considerable differences of opinion as to the feasibility of constructing a railway through Yunnan, which some experts have affirmed to present engineering difficulties that it would cost untold sums to overcome. The British chambers of commerce, on the other hand, have ridiculed these stories of Menai bridges and Mont Cenis tunnels; and they have hammered their views so successfully on the door of the Foreign Office, that surveys are being made at this moment at the cost of the British or Indian government for the purpose of ascertaining whether a railway, such as the one proposed, be practicable or not. The authorities at Peking have already been approached on the subject by the British minister; and an understanding exists that if the line be found capable of construction, the concession shall be forthcoming. It is needless to dilate on the importance of such a means of communication between our Indian Empire and the heart of our sphere of interest in the Yang-tse valley; and the fact scarcely requires pointing out, that the Yunnan portion of the scheme, for which the concession has actually been granted, would form an effective counter-blast to the French design of grabbing the monopoly of Yunnanese trade.

Finally, one may turn to the complicated problem of the Shan-hai-kwan extension to Niu-chwang, which has reached a more advanced stage of maturity than any other projected under-

taking. The prospectus has been before the public; no object would therefore be gained by recapitulating what is already accessible to everybody. But it is interesting and instructive to note two points in connection with the undertaking in its present form. In the first place, the orders of the Russian government have been scrupulously carried out, and the fullest possible recognition has been given to the fact that Manchuria is Russian territory. Secondly, the British government have "consented to take note of" the assurance from the Chinese authorities that none of the railways named in the contract for the loan shall be alienated to any foreign Power "as constituting a binding engagement on the part of the Chinese government." It is to be hoped that the action of the British government, in the probable event of the Chinese being compelled to break their pledge, will be as energetic as their diplomatic phraseology is supposed to signify.

The tardy protest of Russia against the terms of the Niu-chwang extension loan was useful in demonstrating how much could be accomplished by the adoption of a more resolute policy at Peking. But one must not lose sight of the fact that the difficulty has merely been postponed to a later date, unless negotiations between London and St Petersburg should happily end in a permanent solution of this and other pressing questions.

CHAPTER XXV

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Difficulty of estimating Revenue—Method of Collection—Sources of Revenue—The Land Tax—Its Sum Total—Grain Tax—Salt Monopoly—Mismanagement and Peculation—The Foreign Maritime Customs—Likin—Ingenious Dishonesty at a Likin Barrier—Frequency of Collections—Native Customs—Absurdly Low Returns—Miscellaneous Sources of Supply—Mr Consul Jamieson's Estimate of Total Revenue—Mr E. H. Parker's Calculation—A Comparison with the National Income of the United Kingdom—The Canker in the Administration—China's Only Remedy.

OWING to the fact that there is nothing in the shape of an annual budget prepared by the authorities at Peking, it is impossible to arrive at anything but an approximate estimate of the revenues which are at the disposal of the central and provincial governments. The Board of Revenue, which nominally superintends the financial administration of the empire, simply makes an estimate of the sums required for the ensuing year, and apportions them amongst the various provinces. The money is collected by the agents of the provincial governments, and paid by them into the provincial treasuries; the exact amount required by the central government being then forwarded by the viceroy or governor to the Board at Peking. The balance of taxation remaining after this payment has been made to the imperial exchequer belongs apparently to the local authorities, who do not seem to render any account of the manner in which it has been expended. An exception is of course formed by the foreign maritime customs, which is

collected directly by the agents of the imperial government; there being also a few of the native custom-houses which pay their levies without intermediary into the Peking treasury.

The sources of revenue may be conveniently grouped under the following headings:—

(1) Land tax.
(2) Grain tax.
(3) Salt monopoly.
(4) Foreign maritime customs.
(5) Likin (inland transit dues).
(6) Native customs.
(7) Land transfer fees, licences, special levies, etc.

A fundamental principle of the Chinese constitution enacts that the tax on land shall never be raised; but unfortunately Chinese official ingenuity has devised many ways of circumventing this excellent maxim, and the peasants are in reality made to pay an amount greatly in excess of the legal impost. It is customary to remit a quarter of this tax to Peking, and to retain three-fourths of it for the purposes of provincial administration. The sums which are extorted over and above the amount authorized by the imperial government do not appear in the official reports, but are quietly embezzled by the mandarins, each of whom nibbles at the prize as it passes through his hands on its way to the viceroy's pocket. The officials have too much respect for the letter of the law to actually raise the land tax itself; but, according to Mr Consul Jamieson, they seem to get over the difficulty by mulcting landowners, in proportion to the size of their holdings, of an impost which is pleasantly termed chuen-shu, or "benevolences."

A vast amount of peculation is said to go on in the Yang-tse provinces, which show a greatly diminished revenue from this source. The officials pretend that the land is still suffering from the devastation created by the Taiping rebellion; whereas almost the whole of it has been reclaimed, and is yielding

abundant crops. This is of course a more serious form of embezzlement than that tacitly encouraged by the central authorities, as it deprives the imperial government of the legitimate revenue. In assessing the total amount represented by the land tax, one has also to take into consideration the remissions and abatements which are allowed to provinces that have suffered from drought or floods. These misfortunes are sufficiently numerous to make a considerable reduction in the annual receipts. Out of a total of 25,000,000 taels* in land tax, Mr E. H. Parker calculates that 5,000,000 taels usually go in exemptions. A quarter of the tax is remitted to Peking, the balance being retained for local expenditure.

Two provinces, Kiangsu and Chekiang, pay rice tribute. The local officials, however, in order to make as good a thing out of it as possible, collect the tax in copper "cash" † and then purchase the rice in the open market as advantageously as they can. The profit on the transaction finds its way of course into the pockets of the mandarins. The unfortunate farmers are the people who suffer by this method of collecting the tax, as they are made to pay not only the price of the grain, but the extravagant cost of transit to the capital and the fees incidental to its expedition. A large sum of money is, in fact, squandered by these provinces in transporting the rice to Peking, everybody being concerned in making as much out of it as possible. The total amount of grain tax paid into the provincial treasuries is estimated at 6,562,000 taels; of which sum four-fifths reach Peking.

* It is more convenient, in dealing with Chinese finance, to state all amounts in taels without attempting to give their equivalent in sterling. Since 1872 silver has undergone a considerable depreciation, the sterling value of a tael, which was formerly 6s. 8d., being now only about half-a-crown. But the purchasing power of silver in China having undergone no change, it would give a wholly false impression of the state of the Chinese exchequer, were amounts to be quoted in sterling instead of in taels.

† There is no silver currency in China. A tael, as stated in a previous note, is simply a term used to designate a certain weight of silver. The only coins in use are "cash."

It has often been suggested that China should raise additional funds by permitting the importation of foreign salt, but the government have not seen their way to interfere with the enormous vested interests in the present monopoly. The salt supply is administered by the division of the country into seven principal districts, each of which possesses the sole monopoly within its boundaries; and it is not permissible to dispose of any salt outside of the district in which it has been produced, except under special circumstances. Everybody is at liberty to manufacture as much salt as he pleases; but he is obliged to sell it either to government officials or to licensed salt merchants. The general system is, however, for the officials of the salt department to purchase the salt from the producers, and to sell it to the licensed merchants at a remunerative price. The latter do not sell direct to the consumer, but are obliged to take the salt to an officially appointed agent, who disposes of it at an arbitrarily fixed price. In fact, the merchant's function is restricted to choosing the locality where he thinks there will be the greatest demand; and his profit is entirely dependent upon the rapidity of his turnover. The number of licenses issued in a particular salt area is limited; a circumstance which contributes so much to their value, that 12,000 taels are often paid as the price of a single warrant. The owner of a license is authorized to obtain a certain quantity of salt from the government stores at a fixed price, and he cannot obtain more until he has disposed of his previous purchase. It is needless to state that the salt officials always squeeze something over and above the fixed price; in addition to which the merchant is obliged to pay likin.

We are here more concerned with the actual amount of revenue which is derived from the salt monopoly. The consumer is made to pay for his salt nearly nine times the price at which the government purchase it from the producer; yet no more than a quarter of this enormous profit is stated as revenue, that is to say, three quarters of the gross profits on

the sale of salt are swallowed up by the expenses of administration, etc.; a proportion which, like everything else connected with Chinese finance, can only be explained by the colossal dishonesty of the officials. The total revenue from salt is given by Mr Jamieson as 13,659,000 taels. It is obvious that it could be greatly increased by the leavening of the administration with a modicum of honesty.

Very little need be said about the foreign maritime customs, which, being placed under the able administration of Sir Robert Hart, is made to produce the utmost of which honest and economical management is capable. The duties accruing from this source are divided into tenths, of which four go towards the support of the central government. The balance is used for a variety of imperial and provincial purposes, such as the cost of keeping up the foreign embassies, naval expenditure, interest on foreign loans, etc.; including, of course, the payment of salaries and other expenses connected with the department. The average revenue from the maritime customs may be set down roughly at 22,000,000 taels.

The tax which is most abominated by the foreign merchant, and which was probably invented for his special edification less than half a century ago, is that which is known by the name of likin. Its aggravating qualities are so far recognized by the Chinese government, that in making official mention of it they usually add the words wan-pu-tê-i, or "positively no help for it."* Wherever traffic is most numerous and trade is most flourishing, likin barriers are erected by the local authorities for the purpose of bleeding commerce to the utmost extent. An excellent story is told by Mr Consul Jamieson in his interesting report† on the revenue and expenditure of the Chinese Empire, which is particularly illustrative of the strange mixture of logic and dishonesty that characterizes the native official mind. A foreigner, on passing a certain barrier, was

* Quoted from Mr E. H. Parker's letter to the *Times*, 12th September, 1896.

† Miscellaneous Series, No. 415, 1897.

called upon to pay transit dues to the amount of 7.50 taels. The sum having been paid, a receipt was demanded by the merchant, who was thereupon handed one for 4 taels. All expostulation being in vain, he claimed through his consul either that he should be given a receipt in full, or that his money should be refunded to him. The explanation given by the Chinese authorities was that, "though four taels was the proper charge, yet a tael was not a tael in the ordinary sense of the word, but was such a sum as would enable the local authorities to lay down a tael of the standard weight and purity in Peking, and, consequently, included a meltage fee, loss on melting, freight and costs of transmission, and general office expenses, and that all that turned into cash meant, according to old-established custom, 12,600 cash * for 4 taels; consequently a receipt for 4 taels, the legal sum, was the only receipt they could give."

The term "likin" signifies one-tenth per cent., which would not be a very oppressive tax on merchandise in transit, if it were not collected afresh about every twenty miles, and on the principle, described above, that one-tenth per cent. means such a percentage as will enable the likin officials to make a comfortable livelihood out of squeezing and bribery. There is, however, a fortunate circumstance that sometimes comes to the aid of the unhappy merchant: when, namely, alternative routes present themselves. The rival likin barriers will then compete with each other to obtain the pleasure of mulcting him, thus enabling the merchant to compound for advantageous terms. Under cover of the elastic designation "likin" all kinds of extortionate acts are committed, quite outside of the legitimate levy. In this way factories, and other industrial undertakings, are made to pay heavy fees to the likin collectors. An interesting fact in connection with this tax is that by far the heaviest collections are made in the Yang-tse provinces; to which category may be added the provinces of Kwangtung and

* The market value of the tael is in reality 1,600 cash.

Fukien on the south-east coast. "Probably the physical conditions of the country have been the determining causes in this marked distinction," observes Mr Jamieson; "but it also indicates in a very striking manner where the real wealth of the country lies." The total yield of likin is just under 13,000,000 taels.

Merchandise carried in native junks, as distinct from the cargoes of foreign-built ships, is controlled by the native custom-houses. The latter are to be found at the treaty ports, besides everywhere else, in addition to the foreign customs; but possess their own tariff and distinctive native administration. One of the wealthiest and best known collectorates is that of Canton, which is placed under the supervision of an official known as the Hoppo, who contrives to amass an enormous fortune during his tenure of office. The returns of the native customs are, in fact, significantly low in comparison with the immense native trade from which they are derived; and there is no question that the sum total of peculation in this department of state amply counterbalances the good which is derived from Sir Robert Hart's administration. The revenue from native customs is set down at the ridiculously low average of 1,000,000 taels.* To this amount may be added a sum of 2,229,000 taels, which represents the duties collected on native grown opium. Regarding this branch of the revenue, the provincial authorities send in separate returns to the central government, which appropriates the whole of the amount collected to its own uses.

There remains to be mentioned a number of minor sources of supply, which are not sufficiently important, or clearly enough defined, to be included under separate headings. It often happens, for instance, in the case of national emergencies such as famines or inundations, that extra sums are raised by the sale

* In most instances the figures given are quoted from Mr Jamieson's report. The authority of Mr Parker on Chinese finance is, however, so widely recognized, that his estimate of China's revenue will be placed beside that arrived at by Mr Jamieson.

of titles or official promotion; and a regular traffic of this kind is carried on by an institution called the New Naval Defence League, which rewards "subscriptions" by the gift of the honours they are really intended to purchase. Then there are the fines inflicted on mandarins by the Board of Punishments; the land transfer fees; pawnbrokers' licenses, etc.; and duties on live stock. The collective amount received from these various sources may be estimated at 5,500,000 taels.

According to Mr Consul Jamieson's estimate, therefore, the revenue of China may be summed up as follows:—

	Taels.
1. Land tax *	25,088,000
2. Grain tax	6,562,000
3. Salt monopoly	13,659,000
4. Foreign maritime customs (1893)	21,989,000
5. Likin	12,952,000
6. Native customs (including duties on native grown opium)	3,229,000
7. Miscellaneous	5,500,000
Total	88,979,000

The estimate given by Mr Parker, in his before-mentioned letter to the *Times*, is a little under these figures; but it must be remarked that he does not include the grain tax, and that he has deducted from the land tax a percentage for exemptions. The following is an exact reproduction of Mr Parker's table:—

	Taels.
1. Foreign customs (10 per cent. off for expenses)	Gross 21,000,000
2. Land tax (20 per cent. off for remissions)	„ 20,000,000
3. Salt	„ 10,000,000
4. Likin	„ 15,000,000
5. Native customs	„ 3,000,000
6. Miscellaneous	„ 3,000,000
Total, not counting grain	72,000,000

* Mr Jamieson appears to have made no deduction for exemptions from this tax.

If we adopt the more liberal computation, and deduct 5,000,000 taels as representing the annual average of land tax remissions, we find that the entire revenues at the disposal of the central and provincial governments of the Chinese Empire amount to a trifle under 84,000,000 taels. If this sum were to be quoted in sterling, it would give a wholly false idea of China's financial resources to base the calculation upon the depreciated value of silver. The tael is still worth 6s. 8d. in China, as far as its purchasing power is concerned; it would not therefore be inaccurate to set down the Chinese revenue as being equivalent to nearly £28,000,000. In order to appreciate the smallness of this national income for a country with China's vast population and resources, one should bear in mind that the revenue of the United Kingdom for 1897 amounted to £106,614,004—nearly four times as much.

An account of China's finances is a sorry story of dishonesty and extortion. It would be impossible to state what fraction this meagre revenue represents of the sums actually collected by the officials; but there is no doubt whatever that the greater part of Chinese taxation goes to swell the private fortunes of the mandarins. The subject of peculation was treated at considerable length in a former chapter; and one need only repeat here that the system is as much to blame as the individual. Credit should also be given to the officials for the fact that a percentage of their illegal exactions goes in the expenses of the local administration. The parsimony of the central government has been to blame in the first instance. The salaries and allowances awarded to the provincial officials being totally inadequate, the latter are left to make up the deficiency as best they can. A few generations of this absurd and impolitic system have sufficed to turn the whole Chinese administrative body into a seething mass of canker and corruption; and to this alone may be ascribed the fact that the government of China is not one of the richest in the world.

The remedy for China's apparent poverty is stamped upon

every page of her financial history. The people are not taxed beyond the limits of endurance; but if one-half of the sums which are extorted from them were remitted altogether, and the whole amount collected were paid into the national treasuries, the resources of the Chinese government would be ample to meet all demands. It must be remembered that the opening-up of China is entailing heavy additional expenses on the native administration, in the shape of foreign loans, increased armaments, modern innovations, and so forth. To meet this augmented expenditure more funds are needed. But the imposition of further taxes on the people would inevitably lead to revolution; and it must be patent to even the most casual observer that the only course open to the Chinese government is to reform the administration.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PROBLEM OF CHINA

Two Points of View—China's Claims to Consideration—A New Order of Things—Treaty Obligations—Grievances of the Foreign Merchant—Impoverishment of Local Authorities—Necessity of Administrative Reform—The Concession Mania—Summary of British Achievement—Russian Triumph—The Future of the Chinese.

IT is impossible to study the interesting and complex problem of China, without perceiving that there is a Chinese, as well as a European, point of view. An impartial-minded person will also allow that there is a great deal to be said on both sides of the question. One must bear carefully in mind that the action of the Western Powers does not imply a crusade of civilization against barbarity and ignorance, but that it has been simply prompted by a determination to force upon the people of China commercial and political relations which they have always shown a desire to escape. It would be fruitless to enter here into a discussion as to the morality or justification of this persistent interference with the vain and exclusive inhabitants of the Chinese Empire; but it is well to weigh in the balance native aspirations and the peculiar constitution of the country, besides taking into consideration supposed rights of universal intercourse and unrestricted commercial expansion.

The civilization of the Chinese, with all its anomalies and abuses, is entitled to the respect—and perhaps to the admiration—of all progressive communities. There is always a temptation to dwell too much upon the picturesque corruption of the

native administration, and to ignore the many admirable features of Chinese life. The greater part of this book teems with allusions to the peculation and dishonesty of the public officials, in spite of an endeavour to do justice all round. It should be remembered, however, that this evil goes to the very root of China's weakness and the powerlessness of her government to adopt effective measures against foreign encroachment. Hence the necessity of impressing upon the reader the fact that all hope of progress and stability is vain, while this abuse remains unreformed. But, in bringing this colossal national canker into the foreground, we must not lose sight of China's real claims to consideration. The masses of the people are well-organized, sober, and self-reliant; their extraordinary industry has been testified to by every traveller who has visited the country; they are easily governed, being accustomed from earliest childhood to habits of obedience and respect for authority; and, finally, they are peaceful and orderly, unless roused to fanaticism by the influence of the literati, and, one must add, the foolish behaviour of some foreign missionaries.

The geographical position of China has protected her for many centuries from collision with great military Powers. Under these conditions the army, when once the empire had been conquered and the surrounding tribes assimilated, sank almost to the level of a police force, and no more troops were maintained than were necessary for the repression of internal insurrections and rebellions. The advent of Europeans, however, completely upset the national economy; and the successful invasion of the Japanese in 1894 awakened China to the necessity of adapting herself to a new order of things. Since that date chaos has reigned in the empire; the State has been divided into two antagonistic parties; and, to make the confusion more complete, the country is unable to rely upon the honesty and patriotism of the corrupt statesmen who manage its affairs.

Whatever may be the rights or wrongs of the manner in

which Europeans have established themselves upon the mainland of China, the position now is that the Chinese have entered into commercial and diplomatic relations with the West, and that they have been forced to sign treaties and undertake various responsibilities in respect to their obligatory intercourse with foreign nations. It has become the duty of European and other governments to see that these engagements are properly fulfilled; and it may therefore be said, with a somewhat specious logic, that justification exists for the interference of the Treaty Powers in Chinese affairs.

There is no doubt that the position of the foreign merchant in China is extremely unsatisfactory. His presence is only tolerated by the authorities because he yields a profitable squeeze; and they have invented a capital system of robbery, called likin, which threatens to put an end to commerce altogether. The manner in which likin is levied was alluded to in the foregoing chapter; but the inner history of this tax sums up the whole position of foreign trade in China far more incisively than could be accomplished by the most elaborate account of the difficulties which beset the European merchant. By article 28 of the Treaty of Tientsin it was agreed that all transit dues should be commuted by the payment of a fixed charge, equal to one half of the customs duty. That is to say, instead of paying 5 per cent. to the maritime customs, the merchant is at liberty to pay 7½ per cent., which entitles him to receive a transit pass enabling him to convey goods into the interior without further taxation. This arrangement, when it came into force, naturally roused tremendous opposition on the part of the provincial officials, who saw themselves deprived of their most lucrative source of gain. The most complete means have therefore been devised to annul the effect of these passes. A new tax has been invented, entitled the loti-shui, by means of which a duty is levied on merchandise at its place of destination, instead of in transit. In many provinces, however, the officials do not trouble to alter existing arrangements, but simply

make it so hot for the traders, by detaining the cargo for days together or by some other means, that it is found infinitely cheaper to submit to the likin duties than to be robbed or ruined by a more effectual process.

It should be thoroughly understood that the whole system of administration is chiefly, if not entirely, to blame for this state of affairs. The officials are unable to live, and the provincial government cannot be carried on, without the aid of likin; and an innovation which threatens the extinction of this source of revenue, and sends the whole proceeds of a lucrative tax straight to Peking, means simple ruination to the local mandarins. The uselessness of appealing to consuls, and of attempting to enforce the literal observance of treaties, in the face of present conditions, must be apparent to everybody. Commercial relations cannot be made satisfactory so long as the government of China has to be carried on by means of illegality and embezzlement; and this necessity will remain until the most drastic administrative reform has been initiated.

In the face of all these disabilities, the concession mania, which seems to be rapidly spreading in all directions, is almost inexplicable. Concessions are, and must remain, perfectly worthless until some stability has been introduced into Chinese affairs. It cannot be pretended that there is at the present time proper security for life and property in China; and unless a positive policy be formulated, instead of all this negative talk about the open door, which will put an insistence on administrative reform as the first item of a definite programme, it is difficult to see how all these vast railway undertakings, involving an expenditure of over twenty millions sterling, can be profitably executed.

The political outlook is scarcely more reassuring. When it is considered how enormously the commercial interests of the British Empire outweigh the combined interests of Russia, France, and Germany, one is obliged to acknowledge that proportionately little has been accomplished by this country to

protect our stake in the Far East. A worthless and untrustworthy pledge has been given to us that no territory in the Yang-tse valley shall be alienated to another Power; the lease of a naval station, as to the utility of which there appear to be grave doubts, has been acquired in the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Pechili; we have obtained a pledge that the head of the maritime customs shall be an Englishman, so long as British trade predominates; concessions for the issue of extensive loans have been granted, and some new treaty ports opened. This, together with the Hong Kong extension and the railway concessions detailed in a former chapter, is the sum of British achievement.

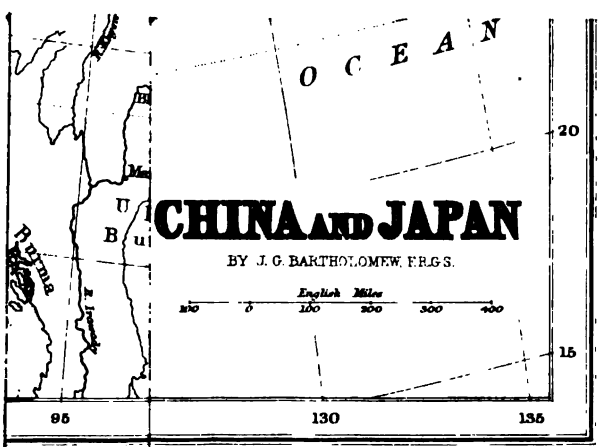
Meanwhile, Russia has completely gained her object. It may suit statesmen to declare that all she wants is an ice-free port, and that the idea of her desiring a protectorate over China is an absurd chimera. The solid fact remains, nevertheless, that Russia has practically taken possession of Manchuria, and that when the railway communication to Port Arthur has been completed, the whole of Northern China, with the capital of the empire, will lie at her mercy. Everybody knows that Peking will be Russian, as everybody knew that Russia intended to establish herself in the Liao-tung peninsula long before the event took place; and it is not necessarily advocating war to suggest that firmness and a defined policy would have arrested occurrences in the past, and might yet possibly save the inevitable collision which must otherwise take place some day in the future.

The question assumes another phase altogether, when one considers the future of the huge empire over which the nations of Europe are disputing. The Chinese have evinced a strong inclination to keep the profits of industry and commerce to themselves, and there appears to be every probability of their succeeding in the endeavour. Apart from the crippling of foreign trade by the imposition of vexatious taxes, and by the employment of all kinds of measures calculated to discourage

the purchase of foreign goods, there are the powerful monopolies organized by the guilds for the protection and preservation of vested interests. No government could tamper with, or restrict, these institutions without plunging the whole country into a state of anarchy and rebellion. The Chinese, it must be remembered, can produce all that is required for native consumption, and are perfectly independent of foreign trade, which in their opinion benefits the foreign merchant far more than it benefits them. They dislike such innovations as steam mills and railways; but when these have been generally forced upon them, can it be doubted that they will turn them to their own advantage?

It is not difficult to predict what will happen when this metamorphosis has taken place. China will begin to supply us with the manufactures which we are now ambitious of foisting upon her. An abundance of cheap and highly efficient labour will enable the Chinese manufacturers to turn out a cheaper, if not a better, article than can be produced in Europe; and the excellent doctrines of free trade will militate chiefly against their propounders. In the commercial race that will ensue the fittest will naturally survive; which may be a consolatory sentiment in the mind of a philosopher, but will probably not evoke the gratitude of Western posterity. To keep China backward on account of this yellow spectre would be a selfish policy. But concessionaires and merchants are probably far nearer the truth than they really imagine, when they assert that the opening up of China is mainly for the benefit of the Chinese.

THE END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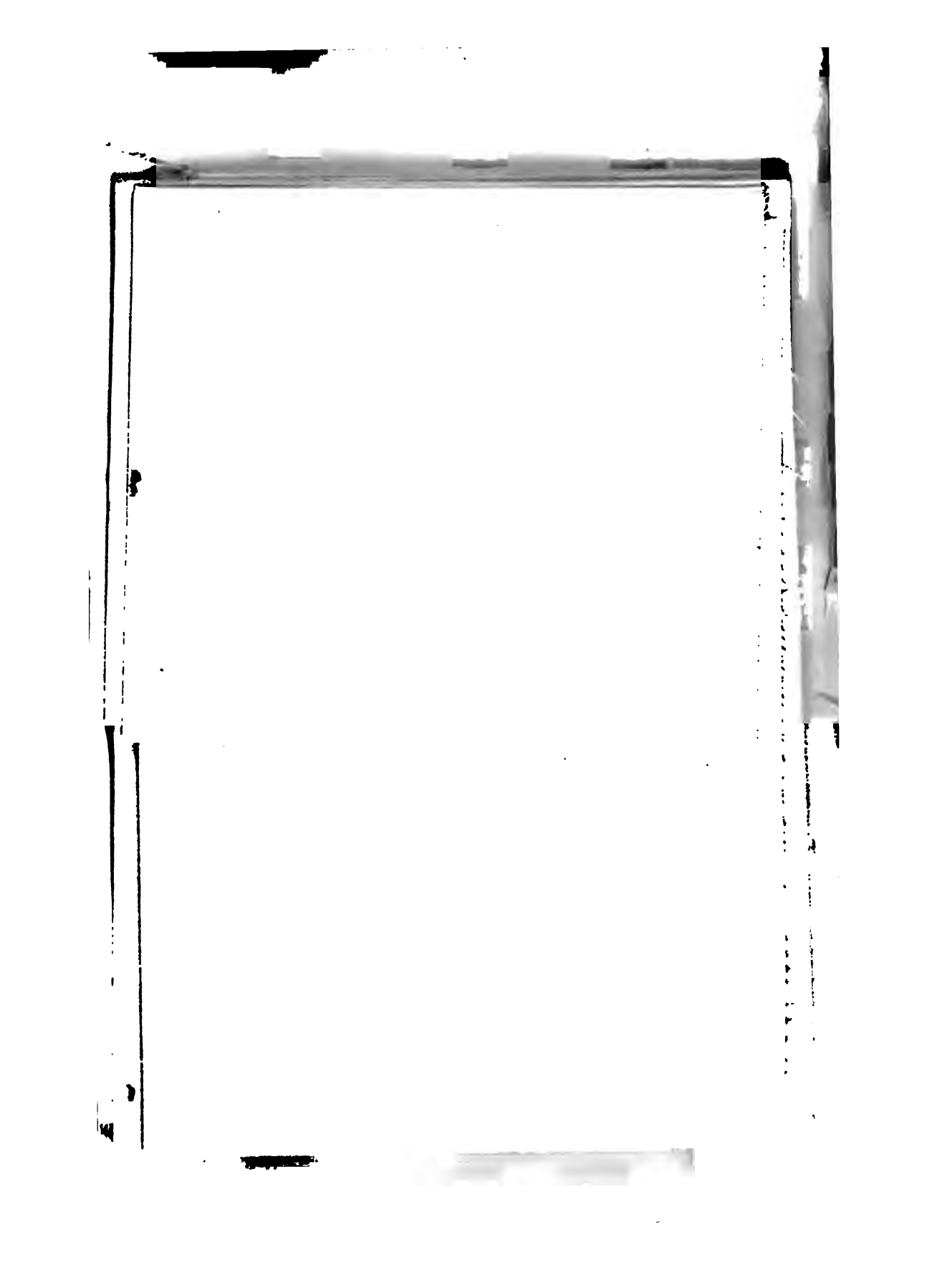
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